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OF
TURKEY

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FOLK TALES OF TURKEY

SOMNATH DHAR



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Folk Tales of Turkey

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To
my mother
grandmother
and Subhana
from whom
I first heard
tales of the folk

PREFACE

My interest in folklore goes back to my childhood in Srinagar, Kashmir, when I was under the care of my late uncle, Mr Gobindji Bhan, and my grandmother, the late lamented Vishimaliji, and our servant, Subhana, who hailed from a mountain village near Gulmarg, and regaled me with folk tales and songs and riddles. Later, I felt an amount of satisfaction when I did some work on the folk tales of Kashmir, and extended the studies to research on Asian and Western folklore. (In June 1988, I was among the recipients of the National Citizen's Awards, mine for folklore; the citation read : "For sustained work on Indian and Asian folklore".)

In Turkey, where I served as First Secretary (Information and Culture) in our Embassy at Ankara (1969-73), I was associated with the Turkish Folklore in Istanbul, and my articles on Asian and Kashmir folklore appeared in a monthly folklore journal in Istanbul. With the Istanbulus and other Turks, I passed the test in the Turkish language when I could relate a witty story of Nasr-ud-Din Hodja, whose tales are given the pride of place in this collection.

It was in Ankara that I had come to know Mr. Ildehiz Divanlioglu, the former Turkish Ambassador in New Delhi. When he joined here in January 1985—his second term here, having served as Counsellor in the Mission a decade ago—he replied my letter, felicitating him promptly, saying, "I remember you as a very able and active Press Counsellor of the Indian Embassy in Ankara." He has been succeeded by Mr Yalim Eralp who is also affable, charming and popular. Before taking up his post as Ambassador to India, Mr Eralp was the spokesman of the Turkish Ministry of External Affairs [illegible]

he was posted at the United Nations (New York), Greece and Belgium, and before his post of the spokesman, he was Minister-Counsellor at the Turkish Embassy in Washington, D.C.

The Indo-Turkish Cultural Exchange Agreement, signed in March 1985, has been renewed, providing fillip to cultural exchanges. Ministerial-level trade talks between India and Turkey, in November 1986, envisaged substantial increase in the level of bilateral trade and industrial collaboration. In October 1988, air services between the two countries were stepped up. The visit of Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Ozal to Delhi, in April 1986, was reciprocated by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who visited Ankara in July 1988. That Mr Rajiv Gandhi quoted a Hodja tale (Hodja vs. Timur), to round off his Banquet Address at Ankara, testified to the perennial appeal of the folk-philosopher of Turkey. With cultural and economic bonds between the two countries being continuously reinforced, it is to be hoped that this book, running into its third edition, will further the process of bringing the people of India and Turkey closer to each other.

I wish to record my gratitude to Mr Tevfik Ufuk Okyayuz, former First Counsellor of the Embassy, for having procured special material for me from Turkey. He has been succeeded by Mr Numan Hazar as Counsellor who is equally forthcoming and helpful.

Also, a word of affectionate thanks to Asha Dhar, my wife—known to the readers of this series as the author of the *Folk Tales of Iran* as well as those of Afghanistan—for her constant help and inspiration, the source of the latter identified by us , as Diva, the "latest lamp in our family".

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New Delhi-48

INTRODUCTION

Myths of Greece, Rome and India are familiar enough. It is not generally known that most probably the oldest stories of man, also dealing with gods, goddesses and demons, came from Turkey, going back to the days of the Hittites. When the present writer saw the monumental ruins of the Hittite civilization at Bogazkoy (the modern name of Hattusas, the capital of the Hittite Empire—1450-1700 B.C. —situated 100 km from Ankara) and Yazilikoy, it was interesting to know that the earliest stories of man were written there on tablets of clay in 'cuneiform' or, wedge-shaped script. The language of the Hittites was akin to Sanskrit, Greek and Latin—that is, an Indo-European tongue. The script was deciphered in 1915 A.D. The inscribed stories deal with the storm-god, the sun-god and other gods of the Hittite pantheon. In the representative story, presented here, the primordial contest amongst gods and goddesses and the dreams of Kessi, evoke similar parallels in Indian, Greek, Thai, Indonesian and other myths.

Turks came to Turkey from Central Asia in the 10th century A.D., bringing with them the treasure trove of fairy tales to which the hearts of the simple inhabitants of the land have thrilled for generations. The writer, who spent 4½ years in Turkey (1969-73) during his Foreign Service career and spoke Turkish, has enjoyed the company of these fine people in village coffee houses or in their homes, where these stories are retold. Some of the stories presented in this book may have a moral lesson, like the Hittite story while others provide innocent material for the whiling away of an idle hour in the winter which can be icy cold in some parts of Turkey. The theme of many of these folk tales may appear to be

familiar: the king putting his sons or daughters to the test, the falcon choosing the next occupant of the throne, the magic carpet getting there in a trice with the occupants, the lover in the guise of the dove, and so on. But there are other tales which have typical Turkish touches : the betrothal feast going on for forty days and forty nights and the Arab as the vamp or the genii. The stories tell, as the folk tales the world over do, of the brave, adventurous prince and princess, the wicked demons and helpful fairies, the childless couple blessed with a supernatural baby, the lemon yielding a fairy bride, and of a thousand and one likely and unlikely things.

We enter the comparatively modern period, typified by the arch folk-humorist of Turkey, Nasr-ud-Din Hodja, whose tales deal with the ordinary doings of humble folk. That "Tales of the Hodja" are most representative of Turkey is evinced by the fact that these are featured under Turkey in "Oxford Myths and Legends", a popular collection covering most countries, going back to the fifties. Hence, tales of the Hodja are given the pride of place in the third edition of this book.

The laughter-maker for all ages, Nasr-ud-Din Hodja, is, in fact, among the celebrities of the Middle East and the Balkans. His honorary title of Hodja denotes the rank of a scholar, one well-versed in the Quran. Wearing the *Kavuk* (special Turkish headdress, similar to the old Indian turban) and *jubbeh* (long robe), the Hodja could act as *Khatib* or preacher in the mosque, as the *Imam* (prayer leader), or a *Cadi* (magistrate). What endeared Nasr-ud-Din to the Turks was his dazzling range of wit, whether the victim was his wife, his neighbour or the feared Mongol conqueror, Timur Leng. Turkish conversation is garnered with his folksy witticisms as Birbal's are in India and Aesop's are in Greece. Like so many tales of the Orient, these may be wish-fulfilment

fantasies, but the reader, young or old, is bound to enjoy the famous tales linking Timur with Hodja.

There are several versions as to whether this legendary figure ever really existed. The belief that the Hodja lived in 14th -15th centuries during the reign of the early Ottoman Sultans has some authenticity because of the humorous tales of his encounters with Timur Leng (the Tamburlaine of Christopher Marlowe). When Timur overran Turkey, defeating the Ottoman Turks at the Battle of Ankara, in 1402 A.D., he is, according to tradition, supposed to have stayed near Akshehir, where he got to know Nasr-ud-Din Hodja. Though Timur struck fear into the hearts of Turks, the Hodja, a sort of court jester, never demeaned himself to abject flattery. When Timur on one occasion asked him what would become of him on the day of Judgement, the Hodja replied boldly, "Sire, you need not entertain the least worry on the subject. You would surely have a seat of honour where your forebears, Chenghiz Khan and Halaku, have already gone—straight to Hell."

Turks keep alive memory of their folk-hero. On July 5, every year, the "Nasr-ud-Din Hodja Festival" is inaugurated in Akshehir, an Anatolian town, not far from Ankara, the capital of Turkey. The three-day programme comprises a panel discussion on the Ḥodja's life, an exhibition of caricatures inspired by his tales and dramatisation of his stories. His mausoleum has no walls but an iron gate with a huge padlock hanging on it—so kept as his last wish "to have the last laugh". By the roadside in Akshehir, none misses the statue of the Hodja sitting on the donkey, wearing the *Kavuk*, but facing backwards. The Hodja's donkey plays an important part in many of the 30 and odd stories given here—like the mount of Sancho Panza in *Don Quixote*.

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"I have wrought my simple plan,
If I give one hour of joy,
To the boy who's half a man,
Or the man who's half a boy."

Sir A.C. Doyle

1

TALES OF THE HODJA

Watermelons and Walnuts

One day as Nasr-ud-Din Hodja was working in his small garden, he became very warm. Seeing no one about, he slipped off his turban to cool his head a little. Then he sat down in the pleasant shade of a walnut tree.

The Hodja's mind was seldom idle. While he relaxed for a few minutes in the shade, he meditated upon the great wisdom of Allah. Chancing to note a fine watermelon in the garden, he smiled to himself. "Now there", said he, "is something I'd have done differently had I been Allah. Seeing that big, luscious watermelon growing on a spindly little vine, I consider the walnut a midget nut upon a great and lordly tree. Ah, who can fathom the wisdom of Allah? If I had been arranging matters, I should have given the walnuts to that puny vine, and reserved the watermelons for this magnificent tree". So musing, he nodded off for a nap.

Suddenly a walnut fell from the tree and landed with a substantial thump on the top of the Hodja's bald head. Awakened, the Hodja ruefully rubbed the lump which had begun to swell on his scalp. Then, an understanding smile spread over his face. In due reverence, he fell to his knees.

"Oh, Allah!" he murmured, "forgive me my presumption. Thy wisdom is indeed great. Had I been arranging matters, I should just now have been hit upon the

head by a watermelon. Ah, Allah, great indeed is Thy wisdom!"

The Hodja and the Merchant

It was the hour of the dawn prayer. The Hodja prayed aloud, "Allah, let me have a hundred coins of gold. But if you give only 99, I shall not accept them, my Lord."

The prayer was repeated by the Hodja, at the same time, at the break of dawn, day after day.

It so happened that his neighbour—a rich merchant he was—heard the prayer. His curiosity was aroused, to see whether the Hodja would keep his word, if he received only 99 gold coins. He put 99 coins in a bag and the next morning, precisely when the Hodja repeated the selfsame prayer, he threw the bag down the chimney. Then he peeped in through the window.

Gratified that the Lord had heard his prayer, the Hodja picked up the bag, counted the 99 gold coins, then deliberated a little, and said, "Merciful Allah, who has given me 99 pieces of gold, will surely let me have the remaining one shortly." He had after all not said that God should give him the whole hundred coins all at once.

The merchant was discomfited a bit, seeing that the Hodja appeared determined to keep the 99 coins of gold. When the sun rose and people started moving about in Akshehir, the merchant went to see the Hodja, this time entering from the front door. He addressed him directly, "*Effendi*, Salaam. A joke is a joke. That's finished now. Please give me back my gold coins."

"Are you mad, merchant?" said the Hodja. "When did I borrow money from you?"

"Come, come," said the merchant, "stop playing games. You know full well that it was I who heard your [illegible] prayer repeated day after day, for the hundred coins, and that I threw the bag with 99 gold coins in it down your chimney this morning."

"You want me to believe that you were willing to take the risk that you would lose the 99 gold coins, just to test whether a true believer like me can be tempted," argued the Hodja. "Sure enough, I possess the coins, 99 of them. Allah gave them to me as a reward for sincere and steadfast prayers. The bag of coins is mine. No one can take them from me."

"I shall take you to the Cadi for this misappropriation, for the coins are mine," protested the merchant.

The Hodja stroked his beard, saying that he was prepared to submit to the judgement of the court. As an afterthought, he added, "My friend, I am not young any more, I cannot foot the journey to the Cadi's court."

The merchant literally ran to fetch a sturdy donkey and told the Hodja, "Here is a good enough donkey for you to ride on. I shall find myself another. Let us go."

More delaying tactics from the Hodja : "You know, I have some position in the society here. Sure enough, I will not present myself in the Cadi's court, wearing this old *jubbeh*."

The merchant had set his mind against Hodja's hedging manoeuvres. Again, he went to his house, and appeared with an impressive silken *jubbeh*, plus an equally impressive fur coat, for the Hodja to wear.

"You can borrow these for the trip," he told the Hodja, "but let us get started."

Examining the dress, the Hodja appeared satisfied, donned them and they set off to the Cadi's court.

The Cadi asked them what the matter was and the merchant told the story, while the Hodja stroked his beard in seeming amusement.

Clearing his throat, to make sure that everyone present would hear him, the Hodja addressed the judge, "*Effendi*, this merchant is my neighbour. It is possible that he heard me counting the 99 coins which God bestowed on me, responding to my prayer. He is trying to be smart, claiming them as his own."

The merchant protested aloud, "*Effendi*, believe me, the coins are mine, I threw the bag of money down his chimney, just to test what the Hodja would do, finding them one short of the hundred that he was praying for."

"*Effendi*, I told you, he is smart," intervened the Hodja, "he will say that my very clothes are not mine, they are his."

"They are mine," cried the merchant, "the fur coat as well as the *jubbeh* : I lent these to the Hodja..."

"You see, *effendi*," the Hodja cut him short, "next he will claim that the donkey I am riding also is his. Everyone in the community knows that I have my own donkey."

"The donkey also is mine, *effendi*, believe me," shouted the merchant.

The Cadi could take it no more. He was infuriated with the merchant and shouted, "You rogue, you are implicating an honest man whose integrity is known to every one. You not only have designs on his property and his money, you are trying to befool me too. Away with you!"

The Cadi's assistants saw to it that the merchant left the court.

The Hodja left the court, applauded by the people who had gathered outside and inside. Ambling over seated on the donkey, dressed in finery, he reached his house. There he noticed the merchant sitting gloomy and crestfallen.

The Hodja invited the merchant to his home and returned to him everything—the mule, the silken *jubbeh*, the fur coat as well as the bag containing the 99 gold coins. As a parting shot, the Hodja said, "Take back your goods, merchant, but in the name of heaven do not try in future to tempt honest Muslims to break their word!"

The Cauldron Died

The Hodja borrowed a big cauldron from his neighbour for the preparation of a feast. When he no longer required it, he put a small pot of the same metal inside the cauldron and took it to the neighbour.

"What is that small pot?" asked the neighbour.

The Hodja replied casually, "No matter, your cauldron gave birth to that while it was in our house."

The neighbour's incredulity was overtaken by delight, and he accepted the cauldron as well as the small pot.

About a month later, the Hodja again requested his neighbour to lend him his cauldron. The neighbour gave it, willingly enough, but this time he did not hear from the Hodja for quite some time.

The neighbour needed the cauldron for a feast. He went to the Hodja's house and asked for its return.

The Hodja was very sorry he could not oblige. "I cannot," he said. "Unfortunately, your cauldron has died."

"Died!" shouted the neighbour. "A cauldron doesn't die!"

"Come, come, don't be ridiculous," said the Hodja, "You believed it could give birth. Why will you not believe that it can die?"

Potters' Mules

Nasr-ud-Din Hodja was busy one day with a homely chore. He was chopping off a rotten branch from his apple tree.

The village schoolmaster, who was passing by, noticed that there was something wrong in the Hodja's posture. He said, "Hodja *effendi*, you better be careful. Otherwise, you will fall and hurt yourself badly."

Pausing for a moment, the Hodja queried him, "May I know how you can tell in advance that I will fall? Are you a fortune teller?"

"Well, *effendi*, I am not," replied the teacher, respectfully. "But anyone squatting on the wrong side of a branch he is felling is sure to fall down."

Hardly impressed, the Hodja observed acidly, "My dear scholar, you stay with your books. I have been chopping trees

since long before you came into the world. So, I think that I can manage this one."

"As you like it, Hodja *effendi*" and with that the schoolmaster went on towards the coffee house.

Hardly had the teacher gone out of sight than the Hodja gave a mighty blow to the branch with the axe and it broke free. The branch fell down with a crash, and with it, alas, the Hodja too. Gathering himself, the Hodja felt the lump on his head as it appeared to be swelling under his turban, and muttered to himself. "Big head, big headache!"

Seized by an idea, the Hodja hastened towards the coffee house. There, catching up with the schoolmaster, he said, "There are folks who point out the road to me if my cart overturns or my donkey stumbles. But you indicated the way before I knew my need. It looks that you are surely a fortune teller. Tell me, I pray, when will I die?"

"Hodja *effendi*, how could I tell? I have already told you that I am not a fortune teller."

The Hodja, as was his wont, wouldn't give up, "You are being modest.One who could tell when I was going to fall from the tree can surely tell me when I am going to die."

The schoolmaster knew that he could get out of the tight corner only by keeping the Hodja in good humour. After some deliberation, he said, "Well if you must know, Hodja *effendi*, you will die when your hands and feet turn cold and have no feeling."

"*Teshekkurler*! Thank you very much," cried the Hodja. "May Allah grant you long life, youngman!" The Hodja left the coffee house to return to his home where he told his wife what the soothsayer had said.

The feared happening took place within the month. The Hodja was returning from a walk when he felt an odd sensation in his fingers and toes. He was reminded... Could it be...?

Soon enough, as the Hodja was lying on his bed, his hands and feet became numb, and then cold as marble.

Taken aback, the Hodja's wife could hardly believe her ears when he declared, "Things are happening exactly as the schoolmaster predicted. I am going to die. Take it easy, my dear wife, don't wring your hands and don't weep. Weep not for the dead but for the living." The lady was hardly consoled. She was crying profusely when the Hodja added,"Now wash me well and prepare my body for the burial. Then go and call the neighbours. They will fetch the village coffin and carry me to the cemetery."

Accordingly, the Hodja, seemingly dead, was washed and the body prepared for burial according to custom. The Hodja's body was placed on the coffin borne by four neighbours, and the small procession of mourners wended its slow way towards the graveyard. The procession swelled in numbers, more and more friends and admirers of the Hodja joining in. There was a rush among them to be the coffin-bearers, for each one was eager to win merit in the next world by having borne one of Allah's devout followers to his grave.

The procession reached a crossroad. They were divided as to which road they should take to arrive at the Hodja's plot in the graveyard. Considering himself an authority, the village watchman indicated the path to the left, saying, "I say we should take this one."

The grocer would have none of this. "We should take this road," he indicated the one going to the right.

The opinions on the issue became arguments. Tempers rose. People shouted at each other. The Hodja could contain himself no longer. Rising drowsily, he said feebly, "While I was alive, we used to go that way"—pointing to the left—and then he lay down.

Having been used to carrying out the wishes of the Hodja for long years, they took the road to the left. They were hardly aware of the incongruity of the situation that the Hodja, apparently dead in the coffin, had spoken the words. Reaching the graveyard, they deposited the body reverently in the freshly dug grave. The service, befitting the privileged status of the Hodja in the community, was conducted with due dignity. The mourning procession then returned to the village, leaving the Hodja to his peace, and perchance 'contemplation' of his unfortunate, untimely passing away.

The cold and the silence of the graveyard, already weighing uncomfortably on the Hodja, was broken by the tinkling bells of a caravan. Shaking off the earth from his clothes, the Hodja, feeling somewhat better, sat up to look around. He was astounded that some pottery salesmen had taken a short cut through the cemetery, forgetting that it was sacred ground, not to be trodden over by mules laden with pots, plates and vases of all sorts.

The Hodja was scandalised. Unable to bear the indecency, he stood up to confront the peddler who was leading the caravan. Alas, his intended gesture produced a contrary effect. Seeing him arise from nowhere, the mules took fright, and kicking their heels, fled in different directions, scattering the pottery all over the place. The peddlers, unable to catch the fleeing mules, spent their wrath on the Hodja, the unwitting cause of their distress. Badly injured all over the body, the Hodja helpless and hapless, was

left for dead in his own grave!

The Hodja had had enough of the death syndrome! He crept out of the grave and walked feebly towards the village. He entered the coffee house to refresh himself before he would meet his distraught wife.

Amidst the uproar of welcome, one villager asked him, "Hodja, we are happy to have you back with us! But, since you have been dead, do tell us how things are in the next world!"

"Well," replied the Hodja, weighing his words carefully, "everything is fine over there, except that you must be careful not to frighten the potters' mules!"

This tale is very representative of the wit and philosophy of Hodja Nasr-ud-Din. If a person is so unfortunate as to receive a punishment out of proportion with the offence that he has committed, he is said to have "frightened the potters' mules."

Allah's Son-in-Law

As Nasr-ud-Din Hodja was about to go to bed one evening, he heard a loud knock at the door. Answering the knock, the Hodja found on the doorstep a wretched-looking beggar. "Alms!" begged the visitor. Then he added: "And not only alms, Hodja *effendi*, but shelter on this cold night. I am Allah's own son-in-law. For the sake of Allah, give me shelter."

"Allah's *son-in-law?*" queried the Hodja. He could hardly believe his ears.

"Well, I said it; you heard me," replied the beggar.

"Ah, yes," the Hodja rejoined. "I have excellent quarters for you. But please wait a moment until I put on my coat."

The beggar, though puzzled, waited on the doorstep while the Hodja donned his long-flowing *jubbeh*. Then, walking briskly ahead to the petitioner, the Hodja led him through one winding lane after another, until the two stood at last before the mosque of Akshehir.

"Here you are," said the Hodja triumphantly. "You will surely feel more at home in your father-in-law's house than you would in mine!"

Bountiful Harvest

A traveller arrived in the small town, Akshehir, one evening. It so happened that he had no money on his person, not even a *kurush*. Plucking whatever courage he had, he walked into a restaurant, and ordered two boiled eggs, bread and tea. Having eaten to his heart's content, he looked for the opportunity when the owner of the restaurant was out of sight and quietly left his seat without paying anything.

Finding work as a porter in the town, the traveller, namely, Mumtaz, settled there. In a year, he had saved a considerable sum of money. The non-payment at the restaurant was on his conscience. He went there and told the proprietor about it, adding, "I am here to pay for that meal. Moreover, I will pay you double. Let us do some computation. The eggs would be about 50 *kurush* each, the bread about 25 *kürush* and the tea may be, 15 or 20 *kurush*. Let us round it off to 200 *kurush*—that makes 2 liras. Well, I will pay you four liras." With that he held out four shining

lira coins to the restaurant boss.

But the proprietor had other ideas. He was eyeing Mumtaz closely, who looked prosperous. Surely, he could pay more than a mere four liras.

Thinking on his feet, he made up a plausible story: "My friend, think for a moment. If I had not served you those two eggs, these could have produced two chickens. And, these two chickens would have laid a great many eggs by now, and each egg hatched a chicken. So, you see, you owe me much more than four liras. Okay, I will settle for 100 liras."

"One hundred! This is extortion," exclaimed Mumtaz. "You will get no such sum from me. As of now, you should count yourself fortunate that I offer you the two liras that I really owe you!" Depositing the coins on the counter, Mumtaz turned to leave.

"Stop, thief!" shouted the proprietor. Summoning a policeman, he had Mumtaz taken before the Cadi (judge).

As chance would have it, Nasr-ud-Din had been sitting in the restaurant, and listening to this interesting altercation. While the gendarmes were pushing Mumtaz away, the Hodja went up to him and consoled him, "Take it easy, my dear *effendi*. I have heard the whole thing. I will be glad to be your witness in the Cadi's court tomorrow."

Surprisingly enough, the Hodja was not to be seen in the court at the appointed time. The Cadi postponed the hearing of the case several times, for he was waiting for the Hodja, who would be the prime witness. The Cadi attended to other pending cases and again looked for the Hodja. Irritated, the Cadi sent a messenger to the Hodja's house to fetch him. It was after about an hour that the Hodja made his appearance.

"Well, finally, you are here, Hodja," said the Cadi, hardly concealing his annoyance. "You were supposed to be here in my court and we had to wait hours for you to turn up. May I know what was going on that was more important than your attending my court?"

"Sire," replied the Hodja, clearing his throat, as everyone in the court listened with expectancy. After a pause, he added, "My wife was boiling wheat for our breakfast this morning. Suddenly I thought that consuming the wheat would be wasting it. So many kilos of wheat could be produced from that handful of boiled wheat. So, I told my wife, 'It is better that we plant this wheat rather than eat it.' And, thus in an inspired mood, I added, 'Then, we shall never need to fear hunger, for we shall have a bountiful harvest to depend upon.' My wife is a nice person; she agreed with me and once the wheat was well boiled, I took it out to the garden to plant it. Sire, your messenger found me there. That job is not finished yet. If, sire, you will kindly excuse me, I still have a couple of rows to plant, to complete the job." Having said that, the Hodja was ready to leave.

"Wait a minute," shouted the Cadi, as an idea struck him. "Did I hear you right that you were planting *boiled* wheat? Why, Hodja *effendi*, even a child knows that boiled wheat cannot produce any wheat at all. If anything, it can yield disappointment! I am left wondering whatever made you think of planting boiled wheat?"

"Sire," replied the Hodja—the people in the court had gathered to a crowd, some discerning ones among them seeing an impish glint in his eyes—"as I was thinking of this case, for which I was to be the witness, it came to me that if boiled eggs could produce chickens, then boiled wheat could surely produce a bountiful harvest!"

The Cadi as well as the assemblage instantly understood the ridiculousness of the restaurant owner's suit.

"The case is dismissed," announced the Cadi.

The proprietor of the restaurant received no more than his two liras for the meal that Mumtaz had had a year ago at his restaurant.

The Right Words

Nasr-ud-Din Hodja was a respected member of the community in the small town, Akshehir. He was sociable in his own way. A group of friends had arranged a picnic at a scenic spot near a river, in the vicinity of Akshehir, and he joined them.

It was a pleasant summer day. Some of the company started setting out the plates and food. Others removed their clothes and splashed about in the cool water.

The din of merriment was disturbed by a loud splash, which was followed by a cry for help. Then an ominous silence followed.

The Hodja, alert as ever, shouted, "It is the tax collector. He fell into the water from the bank."

"But he cannot swim," said a few of the group, almost in unison. Something had to be done to save the man who was, to all intents and purposes, lying under the water.

The village watchman came forth and sturdily swam toward the spot where the tax collector had last been seen. He could see the tax collector's head above the water, and shouted, "Give me your hand and I will pull you out."

In response, the tax collector only gasped, *"Kuk-kuk-kuk"*, and sank under the water.

As this head reappeared, the watchman shouted again, "Be quick, give me your hand so that I can save you!"

"Kuk-kuk—kuk", gurgled the tax collector faintly, and he sank down again, leaving all the folks wonderstruck.

They were, however, happy when the head reappeared for the third time. Just as the drowning man, saying *"Kuk-kuks"* as before, was about to disappear, the Hodja shouted to him, "Take my hand, my friend!" Lo and behold, the man held out his hand, and the Hodja pulled him ashore to safety!

Comforted by massages and other attention, the tax collector recovered his breath. The people crowded round him and the Hodja, and congratulated the latter. The tax collector who needed rest was led to his home by one of the group. The others asked the Hodja, "Do tell us, Hodja *effendi*, how it was that you but not the watchman, could save the man, despite his repeated efforts."

The Hodja replied gravely, "My friends, it is all in knowing how. You have got to use the right words. The tax collector has *taken* all his life. He would not willingly *give* anything—not even his hand, to save himself from drowning!"

Counting Sheep

A man asked Nasr-ud-Din Hodja to mind his sheep until he returned from the market. The sheep numbered twenty. It appeared that the Hodja did not quite stick to the little flock,

out of which one strayed into the nearby forest. The man came back and noticed that one sheep was missing.

"What is this, Hodja?" he said angrily. "One of my sheep is gone."

He counted twenty.

The owner counted, and again, one sheep was missing. The *Hodja* counted again—with his countig, all of the twenty seemed to be there. There was no compromise.

Something had to be done to resolve the situation. Finally they decided to call twenty people of Akshehir and asked each one of them to take one sheep.

The arrivals each took a sheep but one of them stood there without one. "I didn't get a sheep," he said.

"You would have, you pitiful coward, if you had grabbed first and not just stood yawning!" Nasr-ud-Din shouted at him.

Who is Right?

One day, Nasr-ud-Din Hodja travelled with his son from their village to the nearest town. Leaving the village, the Hodja climbed on to the donkey and his son walked beside him. Soon they met a friend who said, "Look at this. Your young son has to walk while you ride in style! Aren't you ashamed?" The Hodja thought: "Maybe, he is right." So he got off and his son rode on the donkey.

They had traversed a short distance when they came across another person. He had this to say: "Here is your

young son riding and you, an old man, are walking! Get off! Let the old Hodja ride on the donkey," The Hodja's son was ashamed and got off the donkey. Now they all walked— the Hodja, the son and the donkey.

A third person accosted them along the road and said: "Hey! Why are you walking? What's the use of having a donkey if you don't ride it?" This was another call to action. So, both the Hodja and his son got on the donkey. When they neared the town, someone cried, "Hasn't the donkey got a life? Both of you are riding the donkey. It's impossible."

This time both the Hodja and his son were nonplussed, their tender emotions aroused. So they took the donkey upon their shoulders and entered the town.

The townsfolk were astounded at the sight and cried. "Never have we seen anything like this before!"

The Hodja replied: "What can we do, friends? This is what happens when you try to please everybody."

Shoes for a Journey

Nasr-ud-Din had his wits about him even when he was just a boy. One day his friends decided to play a ruse on him. After considerable discussion, they thought of a trick to steal his shoes. But how? Suddenly the leader among the group had an idea.

"Nasr-ud-Din," he called.

And Nasr-ud-Din obligingly came over to see what was wanted.

"We've been talking, and Ahmet thinks you can climb that cypress tree. Mehmet and I are sure you cannot. Irfan, here, isn't sure whether you can or you can't. What do you say? Can you? Or can't you?"

Nasr-ud-Din looked at the tree. Then he looked at his friends. Clearly something besides the tree-climbing was on their minds, but he couldn't be sure just what it was.

"Oh, I can *climb* it, all right," he answered.

"Let's see you, then," said the leader. "Here, I'll hold your shoes for you while you climb."

Aha! so that was it... Shrugging his shoulders, Nasr-ud-Din stuffed his shoes into the pockets of his baggy trousers. With a twinkle in his eye, he retorted, "I'll just take them along with me. It may be that I'll find a road at the top of the tree. In that case, I shall need my shoes!"

Timur's Tax Collector

It so happened that Nasr-ud-Din Hodja was present in the court of Timur Leng when the monarch's tax collector was presenting the report on his receipts. Impressively arrayed in columns on the parchment, rolled on his fingers, the figures, as recited by the high official, made for dull, monotonous reading.

Timur was not amused. He could see through the manipulation of the figures, how the revenues had been misappropriated. In short, the tax collector had exposed himself as a downright cheat.

"That is the way you conduct yourself as a tax collector, feathering your own nes[illegible] accounts are white lies [illegible] swallow them. So, swall[illegible]

"Start what, sire?" weakly queried the tax collector, shaking like a leaf in the wind.

"Go ahead, swallow your accounts," thundered Timur. "Quick! We have other things to do." The despot, his eyes already glinting with sadistic joy, awaited the ordeal of the hapless official.

Chewing the parchment bit by bit, aided by glasses of water, the collector choked; his eyes bulged. Timur was certainly amused this time, as he watched all the sheets of parchment disappearing into his victim's anatomy. To reward him on the spot, he said, "Go hence! You are no longer the tax collector."

Spotting Nasr-ud-Din Hodja in the court, Timur declared, "We appoint you, Nasr-ud-Din, our new tax collector."

The Hoja was astounded but he did not show his discomfiture. Keeping his cool, he thanked the emperor for the trust reposed in him.

By the time the Hodja reached his home, he had formed his plan of action. He confided it to his wife. Every morning, he watched with gentle concern as she rolled fresh dough to wafer thinness and baked it to make flat, round pastries. Each day's tax receipts were assiduously recorded by him on the following morning. These were then stacked in a special cupboard to shield them from the prying eyes of friends and neighbours and anyone's tampering touch.

The day of reckoning came—the day when the Hodja had to render the tax receipt account to the stern monarch who knew no pity. He loaded a large wheelbarrow with the precious pastries and trundled off to the court.

Timur was in good humour. "Ah, Nasr-ud-Din Hodja, there you are!" exclaimed the monarch, as he beheld the curious cart in the court. Without offering any explanation, the Hodja handed to the Emperor two sacks containing the collected taxes.

"Where are your accounts, Hodja?" queried the monarch, still in good humour.

"Right there, sire," replied the Hodja, indicating the loaded wheelbarrow.

Hardly trusting his eyes, Timur said, "Let me see one of those things."

The Hodja presented the monarch one of the tortillas, filled from end to end with finely penned accounts. Studying the clearly written accounts and smiling, Timur asked, "May I ask what was your purpose in maintaining your accounts on bread?"

"Only, sire, that *either one* of us should be able to swallow with ease the reports of my accounting labour," the Hodja replied, clinching the issue.

Timur's Holiday Week

Timur Leng had his army headquarters near Akshehir. He went on a tour of inspection of his troops and returned

after a week. The Hodja asked him if the trip had been enjoyable.

The harsh tyrant, a confirmed sadist, who took delight in the infliction of pain, said : "It was a wonderful week. There was a fire on Saturday and one could hear the shrieks of people caught in the flames. A mad dog bit some people on Sunday. They had to be cauterised with red-hot irons. A gale blew down a number of houses on Monday and so many people were trapped inside them. A bull broke loose on Tuesday and gored a number of people, some dying on the spot. A man went mad on Wednesday and killed some people and had to be tortured to death. On Thursday, a woman hanged herself on an apple tree. On Friday, I returned. It was indeed a pleasant trip."

Trembling like a leaf to hear these calamities, the Hodja lifted his hands to heaven in prayer.

"What are you thanking Allah for?" asked Timur.

"I am praising Him for your return," replied the Hodja. "Had you stayed any longer, your light fantastic tripping toe would have spelt the doom of that small place."

Hodja's Gift to Timur

The mighty lord of the Mongols, the terrible Timur Leng, spent some time in Akshehir after he defeated the Ottoman king, Sultan Bayazid, at Ankara. He was, however, on friendly terms with Nasr-ud-Din Hodja.

One day, the Hodja was taking a bunch of beetroots as a gift to Timur. On the way he met an old man who advised

him that beetroots did not make an appropriate gift—he should take figs instead. The Hodja changed the beetroots for figs and hastened with them to Timur's court.

Used to costly gifts of gold and silver, Timur was not happy with this trite gift. He ordered his soldiers to throw the figs at the Hodja.

Pelted with the figs on his face, head and shoulders, the Hodja offered thanks to the Almighty. "Allah be praised!" he said, raising his hands in prayer.

Baffled at the Hodja's behaviour, Timur asked his men to stop. "You have been humiliated," he said, "and what are you grateful to Allah for?"

"I thank Allah I did not bring the beetroots!" replied Hodja.

Hodja the Archer

Chatting with Emperor Timur Leng one day, Nasr-ud-Din Hodja happened to see archers practising in a nearby field. "Ha! So those are your archers, my lord!" he exclaimed. A reminiscent gleam came into his eye. "Not an archer in that whole field can shoot as well as I," he boasted to the Emperor. "In my youth, I was the champion archer of this whole area of Turkey."

"Hmm," murmured Timur Leng. "Champion, eh? Well, if you were champion, you can certainly teach my men something. Come along. I was just about to ride out and inspect the practice."

The Hodja was already regretting his boast, blaming his big mouth. In truth, he was no archer at all, and never had been. But to boast before the mighty Timur Leng and then fail to make the grade could be a very expensive mistake. Deeply regretting his rash statement, the Hodja mounted his little donkey and trotted out after the Emperor to the field.

Calling his archers, Timur Leng bade them attend closely, for they were to receive an archery lesson from a real champion. The Hodja was then given a bow and three arrows, and motioned to take his position.

In an effort to gain time, the Hodja gravely studied the target. By Allah, he could barely see it! He shook his head thoughtfully and said to himself that he should have remembered to practise what he so often preached to his students: "Listen a hundred times; ponder a thousand times; speak once."

But Timur Leng was becoming impatient, and the Hodja knew well the cost of further delay. He could do no more than try.... Taking careful aim, the Hodja released the first arrow. It wavered and fell just a short distance ahead of him. The Hodja smiled confidently. "That, sire, is the way your captains shoot."

With even greater care, the Hodja placed and aimed the second arrow. Alas, it strayed a little further than the first one. Here and there among the archers a chuckle was heard. But the Hodja beamed, and proclaimed, "That, sire, is how your generals shoot...."

With infinite care, the Hodja fitted the third arrow to the string. He spat to one side to ward off the evil eye. Then he aimed the arrow at the target. Allah help him, the bow slipped in his trembling hand, and the arrow, released with

surprising force, flew straight to its goal, lodging itself neatly exactly in the centre of the target.

The Hodja, clever with his wits as ever, looked about him proudly and addressed the Emperor, "And that, sire, is how your humble servant Nasr-ud-Din Hodja used to shoot when he was archery champion!"

Handling the Horse

Pitted against the tyrant who was noted for his cruelty, the Hodja not unoften twisted the tail of Timur, confounding him with folksy retorts. The Hodja was, willy nilly, the companion of Timur on his hunting trips. One day, on such an outing, it started raining, and soon enough it was pouring.

Everyone in the hunting party galloped back home, thoroughly drenched. The Hodja, on the other hand, slowed his pace, took off his clothes, and shoved them under the saddle. When he reached the gate of Timur's palace, he put on the clothes and entered the court.

Timur was surprised to see him in dry enough clothes, and asked, "How is it, Hodja, that you didn't get wet?"

"Sire," replied the Hodja, making a fitting obeisance, "this is the blessing of that fine horse you gave me." Puckishly he added, adjusting his turban, "One touch of the stirrup and the steed flew like the very wind. And, not a single drop of rain fell on me."

On the next hunt, Timur took the Hodja's horse and gave him another one. Again, it rained heavily, and Timur's horse

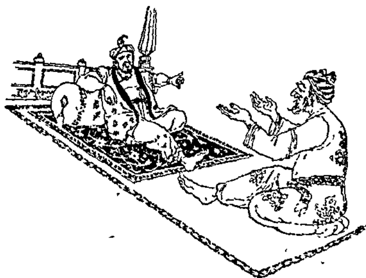
ambled back to the court, the rider wet all over and exasperated.

Seeing the Hodja's clothes dry this time also, Timur flew into a rage, and thundered : "Why did you fool me, Hodja? Thanks to you and this wretched horse, I got drenched to the bone."

"That is your own fault, Sire," replied the Hodja, nonchalant as ever. "You didn't handle the horse right. And, also, if you had only put your clothes under the saddle, you wouldn't have got them wet!"

Not far from a Donkey

The Hodja called on Timur Leng (Timur the Lame). The conqueror's lame leg was paining him. The leg in pain was



stretched in front of him. So he could not get up to receive the Hodja as was the custom. He asked the Hodja to sit on the carpet near him.

The Hodja was angry, thinking that Timur had slighted him. He did not know that Timur's lame leg was hurting him. Sitting down, he too stuck out a leg, in front of Timur. .

Timur was angry. "Hodja," he said insultingly, "you are not far removed from a donkey."

Price of Timur

Timur and Hodja were together in the *Hamam* (Turkish bath). Timur asked the Hodja what he thought the 'conqueror of the world' is worth.

The Hodja replied, "50 *akches!*"

Timur was surprised : "How can that be? The bath-robe I am wearing is worth 50 *akches.*"

"Yes," replied the Hodja, "that is what I am pricing."

Tailpiece

Timur Leng once asked the Hodja how long men would continue to be born and die.

"When heaven and hell are full up," said the Hodja, "it will stop."

The Hodja and his Donkey

One day Nasr-ud-Din Hodja was taking his pupils to the mosque. He was, as usual, mounted on his donkey, back to front.



"Why are you sitting like that, Hodja?" his pupils asked.

"If I do not, you will be behind me when we go to the mosque, and I shall not be able to keep an eye on you. And, if you go in front, I, your teacher, will be behind you!"

His Neighbour's Donkey

For quite some time Nasr-ud-Din Hodja had his eye on the donkey of his neighbour. The strong young animal was so tempting. Unable to resist the temptation any longer, the Hodja crept into his neighbour's garden and took the donkey.

which he then tied up in his own stable. Meanwhile, his neighbour spent the day in fruitless search of his animal.

Late in the evening, the neighbour came to the Hodja and asked, "Hodja, have you by any chance seen my donkey?" to which the Hodja replied, "No I haven't. Why, has it gone?"

"Yes, he seems to have run away."

"Go on looking," the Hodja replied. "You'll find him sooner or later."

Just at that moment, the donkey started to bray loudly. The neighbour started in surprise and exclaimed: "But that's him! That's my donkey! I'd recognize that sound anywhere. But, Hodja, you were just telling me that you hadn't seen him."

Angrily, the Hodja retorted : "Oh, you idiot! What sort of man are you? Would you rather believe the word of a donkey instead of mine?"

The Donkey Metamorphosed

Nasr-ud-Din Hodja was fed up with his donkey. Its temper had gone from bad to worse. To teach it a sound lesson, he decided to go in for a good-tempered donkey. Riding his donkey, he repaired his way to the village market. Carefully scrutinising the lot, he chose a mild-mannered donkey whose legs appeared to be sturdy. Placing a halter around its neck, he led it behind him as he rode his old donkey on his way back home.

This was the Hodja's siesta time; he became sleepy. Two mischievous urchins noticed him dozing in his seat.

Approaching the new donkey, one quietly removed its halter and put it round his own neck, so that the Hodja wouldn't know the difference. The other one led the donkey to the marketplace and secured a good price for it.

Still nodding in his sleep, the Hodja awoke when his donkey stopped at his house, near the door of his stable. Looking for his new, gentle donkey, what did the Hodja see? A ragged boy, with the halter round his neck !

"Who are you?" shouted the Hodja, in anger. "Where is my donkey?"

The boy, smart at his tricks, hung his head and came up with a tale: "Hodja *effendi*, you are right, I was your new donkey. The trouble is that I have been a bad, stubborn boy. My parents became so disgusted with my behaviour that they prayed to Allah to metamorphose me into a donkey, which, it appears, did happen. I had four legs and two long ears and I started braying and eating grass. Kind Hodja, I would have remained a donkey but for your divine intervention in choosing me. May I return to my parents, Hodja *effendi?*"

Still bewildered, the Hodja removed the halter from the neck of the boy, saying, "Behave yourself in future. You can go home."

The hodja's problem was not solved. He still needed another donkey. Once again, he betook himself to the marketplace. He was astounded to find the mild-mannered donkey in the same spot as before, waiting to be sold.

Dismounting from his donkey, the Hodga walked to the donkey and whispered in his ear, "You naughty boy! Will you never learn your lesson?"

The Hodja and his Wife

The Hodja was tired of feeding his donkey day in and day out. Why can't my wife feed the beast, he asked himself?

"Wife, feed the donkey today," he commanded her.

"It is not a woman's job," she retorted.

A heated altercation followed between the Hodja and his shrewish wife on the man-woman job demarcation.

There was no compromise. A 'truce' was reached. They would not talk. Whoever broke the silence first would feed the donkey.

A truculent Hodja and his wife on the war-path retired to different corners of the living room. There they sat unmoving for hours on end. Their stomachs ached and rumbled; the donkey brayed continually but nobody heeded the poor creature.

Fed up with the forced quiet in the house, the Hodja's wife went to her neighbour's house. Of course, she could not keep silent over there and related to her friend what had happened, adding, "He is such a stubborn mule; he will die of hunger and thirst rather than relent and speak. What am I to do?"

"I will send him some soup," said her friend, and she poured some in a plate and sent her son to take it to the Hodja.

Meanwhile, other things were happening in the Hodja's house. A thief, noticing pin-drop silence in all the rooms, ransacked the Hodja's house for whatever valuables were there, stuffing them into his sack. Entering the Hodja's room,

the thief was first taken aback seeing him sitting up, but finding that the old man was not reacting to anything, he came to [illegible] himself [illegible] Hodja's [illegible] move, lest he lose the bet.

After a while, the neighbour's boy arrived with the plate of soup. The Hodja tried to tell the woeful tale of theft to the boy through gestures hoping that he would help in having the thief apprehended. The boy understood nothing. The Hodja circled his hand round his head three times to indicate that he had lost his head-gear even. The boy thought he understood what the Hodja wanted. The soup had to be poured on his head and it would find its way to his stomach. Making three circular movements with the plate of soup over the Hodja's head, the boy nervously yet respectfully tipped the hot contents on his skull. Whatever the Hodja thought or suffered, he still said nothing.



Puzzled and dumbfounded by the experience, the boy ran back to tell his mother and the Hodja's wife about the inexplicable behaviour of the Hodja, how he had tried to 'drink' the soup through the top of his head. He said that the cupboards and trunks were wide open and the place seemed to contain much less than when he had seen it last time.

"There must be something wrong!" exclaimed the Hodja's wife, and rushed back to her home. Entering the house she cried out in despair, "Merciful Allah! What has happened!"

"I have won! I have won!" chuckled the Hodja. "You go and feed the donkey."

Then he remembered the depredations of the thief, and said, addressing his disconsolate wife, "But just look what trouble your obstinacy has caused!"

Matchless Couple

One day the Hodja betook himself to the donkey-dealer to sell his donkey.

An adept at his trade, the dealer announced to the folk, "Friends, come one and all, here is a donkey the likes of which you won't get elsewhere. It is swift as an Arab steed, as gentle as a dove, and as patient as Prophet Job."

Their interest aroused, the people started bidding for the fine donkey. Happy to see the bids going up, the Hodja also started bidding, and finally he outbid all others. The dealer was not a little surprised to find the Hodja put the money in his hand. The Hodja then rushed home with his donkey to tell his wife of his triumph.

No sooner had she heard the Hodja's story, than she had one of her own. Gleefully, she said, "I also scored a bargain, Hodja. I bought a pot of cream when the cream-seller came. He was looking elsewhere while weighing the cream when I put my bangle on the side of the scale containing the weights. Playing this ruse, I got much more cream. I snatched the pot of cream and rushed indoors before he could find my bracelet and get to know how I had fooled him."

"Allah be praised for bestowing such intelligence on us!" commented the Hodja. "As a couple we are matchless!"

Wife's Recipe

The Hodja once bought some meat chops, to be cooked by his wife, who was reputed to be a good cook. Walking back home, his mouth watered at the thought of the special treat that his wife would produce for him out of this shopping. While he was absorbed in this reverie, a kite swooped down and neatly made away with the meat, the whole lot.

The Hodja was distraught but his impish humour sustained him in the midst of this catastrophe. He smiled, and shouted to the vanishing kite: "Well, you have the chops, but what good is the meat without my wife's recipe?"

The Hodja's Blanket

Past the midnight hour, in the winter, when the Hodja and his wife were sleeping soundly, they were aroused by a

commotion in the street. It appeared that some people were quarrelling.

The Hodja, rubbing his eyes, peeped at the street from the bedroom window, but could not make out what the pother was about. His wife remarked that the affair was none of his business and he had better go back to sleep.

True to form, the Hodja never listened to her advice. Wrapping himself up in his blanket, he went to the street.

He found that two men were quarrelling with each other, but they quietened on seeing him. Before the Hodja knew what was actually happening, they grabbed his blanket and vanished.

The Hodja returned to the bedroom, minus his blanket, a little dejected.

"They were quarrelling for my blanket," the Hodja said, somewhat sheepishly. "As soon as they found me wearing it, it appeared that their quarrel was over."

The Hot Soup

The Hodja's wife was as sharp in repartees as he was. One day, for mischief, she prepared a very chilly-hot soup and got ready to serve it boiling hot to her husband. Absent-mindedly, however, she swallowed a spoonful of it herself. The burning sensation in her mouth brought tears to her eyes, but she said nothing lest the Hodja should be discouraged from tasting it. Noticing the tears in her eyes, the Hodja asked her, with concern, "What are you crying for, wife?"

"Oh, nothing dear, it is just that my mother used to like this soup very much, but now she is no more," she said tearfully.

The Hodja murmured a word of sympathy, even wiped his wife's tears. Hardly had the Hodja spoken when he swallowed a large spoonful of the hot soup. Tears rolled down his cheeks.

"What is the matter with you, dear husband?" the Hodja's wife pretended concern, disguising the note of triumph in her voice. "What are you crying for —sure, for my mother! She adored you so...!"

"Your poor dear mother is dead, but her daughter, a wretch, is still alive," he shouted back.

Wanted : The Doctor

The Hodja's wife was feeling sick. She asked her husband to fetch the local doctor.

Naturally the Hodja was concerned and made haste to go to the doctor's shop. He had hardly gone up the street when his wife stuck her head out of the window to say,"I am all right now. The pain had ceased. There is no need to call the doctor."

The Hodja went to the doctor's shop as fast as he could. Brushing aside other clients, he addressed the doctor, "Doctor, my wife fell ill. She wanted me to bring you to the house. When I was leaving the house, she felt better, and, looking out of the window, she shouted that she didn't want the doctor after all. I have come to tell you that you need not take the trouble to come."

Flung from the Window

Leaving his house one morning, the Hodja came across a neighbour, who, it appeared, was wanting to see him.

"Hodja," the neighbour said, "I got worried about you this morning when I heard some sort of noise in your house, followed by a bump."

The Hodja heard him but made no comment. The neighbour pressed him, "What happened, Hodja?"

"Well, well, my good neighbour," replied the Hodja, a little reluctantly, "my wife and I were having an argument. She got angry and flung my *jubbeh* out of the window."

The neighbour's curiosity was not satisfied: "But Hodja, how can the fall of a *jubbeh* produce all that noise?"

"Well, well, well," replied the Hodja, "if you must know, I was wearing the *jubbeh* at the time."

The Inspired Verses

It was a peaceful, winter night in Akshehir, when no sounds disturb deep slumber. Nasr-ud-Din Hodja was sleeping in his humble home, next to his wife.

The quiet of the night was shattered for the Hodja's wife when she heard him shout, "Wife, get up!" She became nervous, thinking a thief had entered the house, and she started mumbling, "Thief! help!"

The Hodja reassured her, but added, "I have a poem in my head. I am inspired. I must write it down at once, lest I

forget the precious lines. Go, my good wife, get me paper and ink."

Hardly enthused and still grumbling, the Hodja's wife fetched some paper and a heavy brass case containing pens and ink. It was an eager Hodja who took a pen from the case and started writing furiously. The job was done but the total effort had been too much for him. He was tired and rested his head on his pillow.

The Hodja was about to put out the candle, when his wife pleaded, "*Effendi*, please read out your poem to me."

Protesting somewhat, the Hodja recited from the paper:

"Among the leaves so green, a black

Hen with a red beak went 'Quack, Quack'!"

Death in the Jungle

The Hodja was lost in profound thoughts, while having a walk in a suburban jungle. A large bird flying abruptly out of the foliage gave him such a fright that he swooned. He lay on the ground for a long time. Nobody appeared on the scene, to give him succour or carry him home. Lying supine for hours on end, he became very hungry and thirsty. It was late in the afternoon when he finally got up and somehow managed to reach home, to tell his wife as to how, when and where he had fainted.

The Hodja's wife started lamenting, tearing her hair and crying loudly. She gave the news to her neighbours of how her husband had died. The friends and neighbours asked her as to where he had passed away.

"In the jungle, outside the town," she said.

"Who gave you the news?" they asked.

"That is the most terrible thing," she said, wiping her profuse tears. "He died all alone, with not a friend in sight to help him. And, in spite of his plight, my poor husband had to walk all the way back home to tell me himself."

Lost her Reason

The coffee house is a sort of club in every small town in Turkey. Nasr-ud-Din Hodja was enjoying his coffee, surrounded by a number of admirers. His discourse was disturbed by a few of his friends who came in with news of his family. One of them said : "Hodja, we are sorry to tell you that your wife has lost her reason. She is badly distraught!"

The Hodja wasn't impressed. He made no move. His admirers and friends awaited his reaction. He thought a little, then spoke, "My wife—I have known her so long, longer than you folks can imagine—has never shown any sign of reason. Well, my friends, how can she lose what she never had?"

Last Laugh

Nasr-ud-Din Hodja was very old. It appeared that his time was up, but his sense of humour had not left him.

The Hodja told his wife: "Why are you so sad and woe begone, wife? Tears streaming down your face and your unkempt hair and black clothes do not befit you at this hour.

Put on your best, most colourful clothes, do your hair properly, and smile."

"Hodja," cried his wife, "how can you ask me to go gay at this hour? You are badly ill, and you know how much I need you and respect you."

"*That is why I ask you to do it,*" rejoined the Hodja. "The Angel of Death is expected here any moment. If he sees you in all your finery, bedecked like a bride, he may leave me and grab you instead."

And, the Hodja breathed his last—with a chuckle!

2

THE HUNTSMAN IN THE SKY

Long, long ago there was a huntsman, Kessi, who lived with his mother. His father had died when he was quite young. So Kessi was very much attached to his mother. Every morning he would go ahunting and bring back choice venison for his mother to eat. He would invariably place a good portion of it at the altar of the gods who, in fact, depended on him for their sustenance.

One day this routine changed for Kessi. He fell madly in love with a beautiful damsel, called Shintalimeni. She was the youngest of seven sisters. As soon as Kessi wed her, he gave up going for the daily hunt, for he was engrossed with his lady love.

Kessi's mother was discomfited. She chided him for neglecting his duties as a huntsman. "Kessi," said she, "the gods go hungry and your mother goes hungry, and all you do is sit at home, petting your pretty wife!"

Stirred to action and ashamed of his negligence, Kessi picked up his spear and left for the woods with his hounds. But he had forgotten the gods. And they forsook him. Thenceforth, however much Kessi stalked the deer, he could get no reward. Thus did three months pass. And home he wouldn't go without the venison for the gods and his mother.

Tired and footsore, Kessi lay under a tree and instantly fell asleep. The place was the favourite haunt of the trolls -

the mountain fairy folk who love to torment mortals. As soon as the trolls saw him asleep, they danced and made merry. They wanted to make a meal of Kessi.

In this mountain also lived the spirits of the dead. While the trolls were dancing around Kessi — still sleeping soundly—his father was watching from atop the hill, thinking of how to save his son from the trolls. "Trolls," he shouted like thunder, "why bother to gobble this poor mortal? Just steal his cloak, for then he will freeze with cold and soon rush back home to warm himself at the fire."

By nature trolls are more inclined to thieve rather than eat, for eat they would anyway. "Well said," they replied in glee, "we will pinch his cloak!" They pulled Kessi's cloak off him, and ran merrily to their dens.

When Kessi awoke, it was night, and he was cold with the wind lashing at his bare back. He reached out for his cloak and noticed that it was gone. Under the unsmiling cold moon and his hounds barking all around, he came down the mountainside and walked in the direction of a lone light which blinked in the valley - and thence proceeded home, albeit empty-handed.

A few nights later he dreamt strange, fearful dreams. He was standing before a huge door. He was desperately eager to open it but it wouldn't open. He was in the backyard of a house where pretty maids were busy with their household chores. A gigantic bird swooped down from the sky and picked up one of them. A cluster of men were strolling in an open field when a blinding thunderbolt came from the sky and fell on them. A throng of Kessi's ancestors came flashing to him, standing round a fire, fanning it into a blaze. Kessi saw himself with his hands and feet bound in chains. And

saw that when he was leaving his house for a chase, a dragon was sitting on one side of the door and there were ugly harpies on the other side.

Shaken by these horrible experiences, Kessi awoke in the morning and related the dreams to his mother, adding, "Mother dear! These dreams mean that if I again go to the hills the trolls will gobble me up. Tell me what to do?" he asked her.

"Don't fear, my child!" his mother replied calmly. "Don't let idle dreams bother you. Go fearlessly to the hills. Nothing will befall you." To cheer him, she repeated lines from an old song:

Ofttimes men cry in panic. 'Lo, we die!'

They cried before—and yet are here to cry.

When Kessi was leaving for the hunt, his mother produced a skein of blue wool. "Take this," she said, "there is potent magic in it which will protect you from every harm."

However, the gods were not placated. The were still angry with Kessi for his neglect of them. They caused all the beasts to flee into hiding. Kessi searched and searched but in vain. He was exhausted. All of a sudden he found himself in front of a huge door. On its one side crouched a dragon and on the other were hideous and horrendous harpies.

Kessi stood staring for some time. Then he tried to force the gate open but to no avail. Tired, he thought of resting and sleep overpowered him. When he awoke, it was already dark and he prepared himself to return home. A glimmer of light showed from afar, coming nearer and getting brighter and brighter. The light almost blinded him and he closed his eyes with his hands. When he opened his eyes again, before him

stood a tall radiant figure, clothed in light and holding a gleaming key in his hand. "Stranger, I have waited long for this door to open," Kessi addressed him, "Please let me in now."



The stranger his shook his head and said, "You cannot. This is the door of the sunset and inside is the land of the dead. No mortal passes through it for none comes back."

Kessi was scared to death, yet mustering courage, he asked the stranger, "How can you go in through this door?"

The stranger smiled and said, "I am the sun," and so saying unlocked the door and went in.

On the other side of the domain of the spirits, the departed were at the receiving line to welcome the sun-god on his nightly visit. Kessi's father-in-law, Udipsharri, was amongst them.

Hearing his son-in-law's voice, shouting hoarse to be let in, he was overjoyed. "Never before have mortals come to visit the dead," thought Udipsharri. "This time, at long last, I shall hear the news about my loved ones on the earth through my son-in-law."

Falling at the feet of the sun-god, he entreated him, "Good God! Let Kessi pass through the door," Udipsharri cried with tears in his eyes, "for I would hear news of my folk through him."

The sun-god was stern and said, "That privilege can be allowed to no living man. Only the gods can pass through the door."

But Udipsharri continued to cry, plead and implore.

Moved by Udipsharri's wailing, the sun-god said, "All right, All right! let Kessi pass in but let him follow me down the dark path." The sun-god added, "But once he has entered these realms he may return to the land of the mortals. Keep him under vigilance, bind his hands and feet, lest he try to escape. When he has seen everything in his realm, bring him to me so that I put him to death."

Kessi was thus let in. He found at the entrance of a dark and narrow tunnel the sun-god ahead of him, his bright light getting dimmer and dimmer. Udipsharri bound Kessi's hands and feet and beckoned him to keep walking with him and follow the fading light.

Kessi was dragging his feet and going on and on, and Udipsharri plying him with questions about the news of his loved ones on the earth.

Suddenly, Kessi stopped near the bend of the tunnel, for there in a kind of clearing, was the scene which he had seen in

his dream—of departed people, standing around a fire, fanning it with bellows.

"Who are these people?" Kessi asked Udipsharri.

"These", replied Udipsharri, "are the craftsmen of God who make thunderbolts and lightning which he hurls upon the earth." Walking still further, Kessi halted again at the persistent whirring of wings and a gigantic bird fluttering, brushed against his cheek.

Aghast, he asked his father-in-law what they were.

"These are the birds of death, which carry the souls of the departed to the world below," he replied.

Kessi recollected the shape of the giant bird he had seen in his dream.

Suddenly, the little light of the sun-god which was moving ahead moved no more. Thus they came to the end of the tunnel. There the sun-god stood against a massive door, a malicious smile on his lips.

"Kessi," thundered the sun-god, "you are now in front of the gate of sunrise. Farther than this you cannot go, for the time has come for you to die. Beyond this lies the domain of the living, and there you cannot return now."

At this revelation Kessi was dumbfounded and trembling. He fell at the feet of the sun-god and pleaded pathetically: "Lord God! take me not in the prime of my youth, for I would like to see my beloved once more before my time for death comes."

Suddenly, the sun-god remembered how Kessi had for years provided him the daily viands risking his life, and

that he walked trustingly with him how. He was moved to pity and raised Kessi up.

"Kessi," said the sun-god in a kindly tone, "he that has seen the things in the domain of the spirits can never return to the land of the living. However, I will take you to a world of light—your beloved as well—and set you amidst the stars* for ever."

And, hence on a cloudless night we can see the huntsman standing in heaven. Nearby in a sevenfold glory, are Shintalimeni and her six sisters. But the hands of the huntsman are bound and his feet adorned with chains.

* Kessi was probably Orion (of Greek and *other myths*) to the Hittites. Orion was also a huntsman like Kessi and got chained to the sky. He is represented as pursuing the seven sisters, specially the youngest, who became the Pleiades. An important constellation to the peoples of both hemispheres, from ancient times, the Pleiadas (*seven daughters of Atlas*).

3

ORHAN AND AYSHE

There lived a prince, namely, Orhan, whose father was the king of Turkey. Bored with the dull life of the palace, he decided to go upon an adventure in order to see the world for himself. To the king he said he would go on a hunt to which the king gave permission, providing him funds for the trip.

Orhan travelled for days, meeting many people, enjoying their company and the varied experiences that befell him. One day he came across three brothers in a town. As was the custom, he greeted them individually, and each one wished the other well. He liked their courtesies which reflected their upbringing, and he expressed a desire to join their brotherhood.

"We will ask our grandmother," the eldest brother said, "if she agrees, my friend, you be our brother."

The brothers went to the old lady and asked her advice. She thought awhile, then said, "You are three, my children. With Allah's grace, you will be four."

Orhan thus joined the family and felt happy in the company of the three brothers as he never had in the close confines of his palace. There was a carefree comradeship between the brothers. Each one helped the other and all of them kept their parents and grandparents happy.

In the town, there lived an extremely beautiful girl, Ayshe. Every eligible bachelor was in love with her. Orhan

saw her and fell in love with her at first sight. After that moment, he knew no rest. If he felt at ease, it was only in her company, or when he was with the three brothers with whom he shared the secret of his love for Ayshe. There came a happy day when Ayshe, realising the intensity of Orhan's love for her, gave him her ring. Overjoyed at her gesture, which signified her consent to their becoming man and wife in due course, Orhan presented her a golden bracelet. This exchange of presents was followed by a formal betrothal.

Orhan and Ayshe continued to live at their respective places, for that was the custom. They would live together only when the marriage ceremony would take place.

In the town there lived a formidable character who was nicknamed Kara Kaptan (Black Captain) for his prowess and his dark wheatish complexion. He too loved Ayshe as did so many young men of the town. He heard about Ayshe's engagement to Orhan, and was smitten with jealousy. He bided his time.

Kara Kaptan's opportunity came when Orhan, again attracted by wanderlust, went hunting with the three brothers. The hunt became a prolonged affair. Kara Kaptan spread the word that Orhan had died in the hunt. He saw to it that the news reached Ayshe. She was shocked beyond belief. Kara Kaptan consoled her, day after day, and finally persuaded her to be betrothed to him.

The betrothal was to be followed by the marriage ceremony. The ceremony itself was to be preceded by a feast of forty days and forty nights. The celebrities started, participated by many in the town.

On the 39th day, rather the evening, Orhan and the three brothers returned from the hunt. The old grandmother,

seeing them, said, "Where have you all been? Orhan's bride has been stolen by the wily Kara Kaptan. This is the 39th night of their wedding feast. One more day to go and Kara Kaptan and Ayshe will be man and wife."

Orhan, taken aback, took stock of the situation, and addressed the grandmother, "Thank you, grandma, for your concern. Tomorrow we will see whose bride Ayshe is going to be."

Orhan conferred with the three brothers and they hatched a clever plot to snatch Ayshe from the clutches of Kara Kaptan. Orhan dressed as a dervish, looking the part with a lute in his hands, and appeared, in that guise, at Kara Kaptan's wedding feast.

The three brothers, also deftly disguised, went with him. They took two fast steeds with them, and concealed them in a stable near the venue of the feast. The first brother took the part of a winebearer. The second became a bearer who wanted to serve sweetmeats. The third showed up at the feast to serve coffee.

At a signal from Orhan, his adoptive brothers used their persuasive tactics to make the guests drink as much wine and coffee and partake of the sweetmeats and other snacks as they could. They were indeed satiated and overcome with sleep.

Having done with the guests, they turned their attention to the master of the house. The eldest brother told Kara Kaptan, "*Effendi*, a holy dervish has come. He awaits your pleasure outside the chamber. He plays the lute and sings so well..."

"...Yes, I noticed the dervish," said Kara Kaptan, intoxicated himself, "do invite him and let him enter guests."

Orhan entered, stroking his beard with his left hand, and his right hand index finger on the lute, already giving out a low sad tone. He saw that his beloved, Ayshe, was squatted on a throne-like seat, behind seven lattices. He had to make his presence known to her. He struck a romantic note and sang an improvised song about how a lover's cup of happiness was full, until an intruder stole his loved one, who had his bracelet. The brothers took up the refrain of the song.

Ayshe was a little confused, hearing the song about the lover and his bracelet. She saw her ring on the right hand of the dervish, and in that instant, recognised him.

The shock of discovery, that Orhan—her lover, whom she truly loved—was alive, was too much for her. She fainted. The maid-servants rushed hither and thither to fetch water and palliatives for her.

Ayshe came to. This was the moment that Orhan and his brothers were waiting for. They entered the bridal chamber and took her away. Finding the saddled steeds in the nearby stable, Orhan and Ayshe rode them and galloped away. The brothers quickly returned to their home, changing their disguise on the way.



[illegible]

by a mountain stream. They halted there to drink the water, to relax in the beautiful surroundings.

Ayshe needed the rest, saying, "Orhan, my love, I would fain have a little sleep."

Resting her fair head on Orhan's outstretched knee, Ayshe fell asleep in no time, dreaming sweet dreams. Orhan noticed a cloud of dust in the distance, on the bridle track down the mountain. He gussed it could be no one but Kara Kaptan madly galloping after them. He did not have the heart to awaken Ayshe. He was in a fix what to do. So he sang a sad song.

Ayshe awoke with a start: "What is it, Orhan, my love?" In reply Orhan showed her the cloud of dust, becoming bigger, at it approached them on the track. He said: "It could be none else than Kara Kaptan, and since we can't flee in time, I better face him."

Ayshe rose to the occasion like the brave Turkish girl that she was. "Entertain no fear, Orhan, my love," she said, with determination. "Loosen one of the pack saddles and let me have it. I shall stand to a side when Kara Kaptan lunges at you. I shall hit the back of his head with the saddle."

Reluctantly, Orhan agreed with this stratagem, because he did not wish to expose his beloved to any danger. Orhan moved forward to the track and awaited the fury of Kara Kaptan.

Halting his horse, Kara Kaptan shouted at Ayshe, "You faithless slut, you betrayed me...." With these words, he advanced with his sword towards Orhan.

In that instant, Ayshe stealthily came from behind, and hit Kara Kaptan on the nape of his neck with the saddle. He was about to swoon, when Orhan felled him to the ground with his sword.

Having finished with Kara Kaptan, the lovers decided to march onwards as fast as they could. Soon enough, further trouble awaited them. They were overtaken by Kara Kaptan's men who were riding on the fastest Arab steeds. Having followed their chief and having understood that he had been killed by Orhan, they had sworn vengeance against the killer.

Orhan saw that the odds were against him. Fighting the bloodthirsty horde was useless, he knew. He took out his lute and, playing a sad note, sang a doleful song. The followers of Kara Kaptan were somehow affected by the sad ditty. They knew that their leader had snatched Ayshe from Orhan and given out the false news that Orhan was dead. In any case, Kara Kaptan was himself dead. Why should they add to the tragedy with the killing of a fine man who could sing so well? They let Orhan go, and themselves returned to their town.

Orhan and Ayshe proceeded post-haste on their journey. Before they knew where they were, they had reached the part of the Turkey, which formed the kingdom of Orhan's father. Near the border, they were accosted by Turkish soldiers. The soldiers mistook them for foreigners who had crossed the border without permission to enter the land.

The soldiers might have killed them on the spot but for Orhan's plea. He told them, "I am a prince, the Sultan's son. The Sultan is, as you know, from the race of Ali Osman."

When Orhan presented some more facts about his father, they believed him and kissed the hem of his garment to show

their loyalty to him. They sent an express messenger on the fastest steed to give the happy news to the Sultan that his son, Prince Orhan, had returned.

The Sultan sent courtiers and soldiers to escort Orhan. Orhan and Ayshe were led in triumph to the palace. The Sultan and his wife were overjoyed to see Orhan and Ayshe. They arranged a wedding feast,which according to custom, lasted forty days and forty nights. On the fortieth day, Orhan and Ayshe were married with pomp and show and they lived happily ever after.

4

THE MAGIC MIRROR

Once upon a time there was a king who had no children. He wanted very much to have a son who would perpetuate his name. So he married again. In a few months, the wife told him that she was with child.

The time for her delivery came. Preparations were made in the palace for the big event. The king, however, was pensive. He told the queen, "Pray to Allah that it is a son, for, if it is a daughter, I shall forthwith command the executioners to bring your head to me on a plate..."

The king broke off at that, leaving the chamber. The message was very clear to the hapless queen. She lost her sleep over the puzzle as to what she was going to have, a son or a daughter. The hour came at last. The poor queen was the unhappiest person in the world when she was told that it was a baby girl. She cried herself hoarse.

The nurse, who was her confidante, asked the reason for her unhappiness. Sitting up in her bed, slapping her forehead, the queen wailed, "Why should I not weep, friend? The king has said that if I have a daughter, I will be beheaded."

The nurse was smart and resourceful. To the amazement of the mother, she dressed up the baby in the robes of a boy. Winking, she said to the mother, "Leave the rest to me." Word was sent to the king that the queen had given birth to a baby boy.

The king was overjoyed. Presents were sent to the nurse and others of the royal household and distributed all around. The palace was illuminated at night and the subjects followed suit, lighting up their houses with lamps and fireworks.

Time passed. Months rolled by and became years. The older the baby girl grew the more her mother was worried. Nobody except the nurse knew why she was eating her heart out. It was the fear of discovery of the dressed-up prince who was really a girl.

The 'prince' was nearly sixteen. The king told the queen one day, "I am getting old. I wish to see the prince betrothed before I pass away." The queen said nothing. She was astounded, not knowing what to do.

Soon after, the girl asked her mother, "Mother dear, why do you pine so much? Do tell me the reason."

The queen felt that the time had come to tell her daughter as to what had ailed her all these years. Besides, signs of puberty were showing in the girl, and it wouldn't be long before everyone would know her true sex. That was the day the queen feared most.

Her mind made up, the queen spoke to the girl, "My love, you know why you have been dressed as a prince since your birth. The king, your father, believes that you are his son. Before your birth he had warned me that if you were a girl, he would have me executed. It was the faithful nurse whom you know so well who made you appear as if you were a boy and it has been like that ever since. Now the matter is getting complicated. The king wishes that you be betrothed now. And, when he gets to know that you are actually a girl, that will be my end."

Embracing her mother and kissing her to console her, the princess replied boldly, "Take it easy, mother dear. Though you did not take me into confidence earlier, I knew in my own way that this day would come, for I was dressed and treated as a prince. Let the betrothal be arranged. When the feast is ready I shall request my father to lead my colt to the garden pool where the colt can have a drink. The colt will carry me to the high mountains beyond, where none can pursue me. Then, Allah willing, I will come back one day!"

Before the betrothal feast, the princes bade a tearful farewell to her mother in her chamber. She said her thanks to the faithful nurse. Outside, the palace was astir with the guests sitting for the feast, to the accompainment of the musicians.

As the 'prince' appeared, the king spoke "My dear son, this is the proudest day of my life. It is my earnest hope and prayer that you will be ever happy with the girl that I have selected for you from the most noble family of Turkey."

Realising that this was the right moment to make his request, the 'prince' said: "My dear father, I am also delighted. May I lead my horse to the garden pool and have a ride on the bank to refresh myself before the long proceedings of the evening?"

"Please yourself, my darling son," said the king.

Going to the stable, the princess—for that is what she was—bridled the colt but started crying. The young horse took pity on the rider it loved so well and found speech to console her: "With the wisdom of horses, I see everything. I know your problem. Take heart. I will take you, swiftly as the wind, wherever you wish to go."

Fondling the colt's mane, the princess mounted him, trotting round the pool for a while. At the signal from the princess, the mettlesome colt scaled the wall and they rode away. The king's guards pursued them but the colt was much too swift for them.

The princess rode like a fury, over hill and dale, until she reached a wide meadow. The colt was very intelligent to sense the surroundings and told the princess, "I have brought you as far as I can go. Now I must return. Ypu see that yonder light. Approach it and then fend for yourself." As an afterthought, the understanding horse added, "Here are seven of my hairs. Keep them carefully in your wallet. Should you ever need me, rub them and I will be there. Allah will look after you, for your heart is pure!"

Parting with her faithful steed was sad for the princess, but there was no alternative. She hurried towards the big house wherefrom the light was showing. She knocked at the door. A man responded, asking, "Pray, what can I do for you?"

The princess narrated a tale of woe, adding, "Have pity on me, good sir! I can be a servant in your household."

The man, moved by her story admitted her and employed her as a kitchen-boy. The princess did the job so well that she was shortly given the post of the chef.

The mansion was actually a palace. Unknown to the princess, she was cooking meals for the prince, who was a widower. He liked the food cooked by the new cook so much that he sent word one day, "Send to me the one who is cooking my food."

The princess made her clothing as trim as she could make it, to look the part of the boy-chef.

The prince was happy to see the handsome chef, and said, "My boy, you have rare achievement for a cook at your age. Wherefrom have you come?"

Relating her tale of suffering, the princess said, "I am the son of a very rich merchant who was transporting his goods from the port to his town. In the desert, I lost track of the caravan and found my way to your palace, in a helpless state."

The prince said, "It is just as well that you have done so. When I saw you first, I knew from your bearing that you came from the nobility." Looking the young man up and down, the prince added, after a pause, "One of your birth is not meant to cook. You deserve better in life and you are going to have it. I have three daughters; take your pick, you can marry whomsoever you choose. Mind you, the youngest is rather naughty and playful."

The princess (still in disguise) saw the three girls. She was most impressed by the frolics of the youngest who was the most winsome and alluring. She told the prince that she liked the youngest most. "Well', well, my son," said the prince, "you are choosing the most headstrong daughter of mine. Let me see. Maybe, I have to speak to you again."

He spoke to his daughters and told them that the youngman had opted for the youngest. She was taken aback, though she didn't show it much, but said, "Father dear, I shall think over it tonight. I shall tell you tomorrow what my answer will be."

No satisfied with the prince's answer, the disguised princess went to the chamber of the third daughter at the dead of night and watched through the keyhole. Round about midnight, the girl stirred herself from her bed and put a bowl

of water near the window-still. In a few minutes a dove flew into the chamber. The girl sprinkled a little water on its head. It changed into a handsome young man. After the lovers embraced and kissed each other, the girl said to him: "I am in a mess, my dear. An upstart who has cropped up from nowhere has asked for my hand in marriage. I haven't given my answer yet. I don't know what to do!"

"Allay your fears,my princess," said the young man. "We can easily get rid of the intruder. Tell your father that the youth should bring the finest mirror in the world for you. That rare mirror is in the custody of a demon in a garden. When this fellow will try to snatch the mirror, the fierce demon will kil him, and you will be easily rid of an unwanted suitor."

Next morning the princess told her father, the prince, that she wanted the finest mirror in the world. If the young man would get it for her, she would marry him.

The prince was amused. His wilful daughter was true to her character! He called the boy-chef, that is, the princess in disguise, and told 'him' that his daughter wanted the finest mirror in the world and that was the condition of her betrothal to him. The prince added, "You see, my son, this is a wilful girl. Her whim has to be satisfied."

The disguised princess replied, "Sire, do not be bothered. With your and Allah's blessing, I shall fetch the mirror."

With that the princess took leave, preparing for the journey that lay in front of her. She rubbed the hairs of the colt and it appeared in a trice. She told the faithful colt her problem.

"The mission is formidable," said the colt, "but let us pray for the blessings of Allah!"

She rode the colt and it galloped away till they reached the garden of the demon. The all-knowing colt gave the princess some important tips before she entered the garden: "You will come across a lion and a lamb not far from the gate. You will see a stack of hay before the lion; you may remove it and put it in front of the lamb. The meat facing the lamb should be put before the lion. Going further, you meet the demon. Seeing you, he is bound to say. 'I am going to prepare some soup!' Actually, he will be entering his chamber to sharpen his teeth, so as to make a meal of you later. The moment he disappears, you seize the mirror, climb the garden fence and run. I will be waiting-"

Everything happened precisely as the omniscient colt had said. No sooner had the demon said that he was going for his soup, than the princess snatched the mirror from its case and fled from the scene, leaping over the stream that flanked the garden after she had scaled the wall nimbly.

Realising the loss of the mirror, the demon pursued the princess but she was across the stream already. The demon ordered the lamb, "Catch the intruder."

The lamb replied, "Why should I tròuble a kind mortal? He gave me grass to eat. You used to put the wrong food in front of me."

When the demon asked the lion to stop the trespasser, the lion gave a similar answer, refusing to oblige the demon.

His fury spent, all that the demon could do was to shout, so as to wreak vengeance on the intruder, "If you are a boy, my curse will turn you into a girl, and if you are a girl, you will be a boy in this moment."

The curse had its effect instantly. The princess was transformed into a man! Unknown to the demon, she was the

happiest person on the earth at the change. The faithful colt, waiting for the princess—now transformed into a prince—was also happy at the turn of events, and carried the prince to the garden outside the palace.

The dove-lover saw from afar the prince walking back to the palace and knew that his game was up. Flying to the princess, it said: "We have to acknowledge the superiority of such a brave prince. You were mine but now I surrender you to him." The dove flew from the princess' window even before the prince made a triumphal entry into the palace where he was welcomed by the ruling prince.

The father called the youngest daughter and handed over the finest mirror of the world to her. She gave her hand in marriage which was solemnised after a feast that lasted many days and nights.

When they became man and wife, the prince and his wife travelled to his kingdom. They were happily received by the prince's father who had aged considerably. The queen had cried so much all these years that she was on the point of becoming blind. She was overjoyed to meet her only child, who finally became a prince and a proper heir to the throne. The old king passed on the kingdom to his son and they—all of them—lived happily for many, many years.

5

THE YOUNGEST PRINCE

Once upon a time there was a king. He had three sons. The king loved them equally and well, but one day he took it in his head to put their love for him to test.

"Tell me, my dear sons, how much do you love me?" the king addressed them.

The eldest answered first, "Sire, my dearest father, I love you more than all the treasures of the world." The king was duly gratified.

The second son bowed, as was the etiquette of the court and said, "Sire, you are dearer to me than any person or possession." The king looked well pleased at this reply also.

The turn of the youngest prince came. He embraced his father lovingly, then made an obeisance, and said, "Sir, my dearest father, you are as dear to me as salt."

Hearing this unexpected and unconventional reply, the king flew into a temper, and shouted, "You ungrateful son, you will pay for this remark with your very life."

The king clapped his hands. A soldier appeared. The king bade him to produce the executioners before the royal presence. Armed with double-edged swords, two big, burly men appeared, bowing low before the throne.

"Take this wretched prince to the forest," the king ordered them, "and execute him there."

Girding their swords, the executioners handcuffed the hapless prince, and led him out of the palace. Soon they were in the thick of the forest but, having come to know what the prince's 'crime' was, they were reluctant to carry out the royal command.

After conferring between themselves as to what they should do, short of carrying out the behest, one of them said to the prince, "You are as good as our son. We feel so much pity for you. We just cannot bring ourselves to behead you. We have thought of a stratagem. You take off your shirt. We shall dye it with the blood of a rabbit to show it to the king. You must leave the kingdom, never to return again."

The prince, overjoyed at this turn of events, said a grateful goodbye to his benefactors, and took to the road, away from the city. He wandered for days together, up hill and down dale, until he reached another kingdom. In the suburbs of a town, he knocked at a door.

An old woman opened the door. The prince told her a sorry tale, that he was an orphan who had travelled far in search of livelihood and that he needed shelter. The old woman, who had no child, took pity on the prince and not only admitted him to her home but adopted him as her son.

The king of this country had died a day ago. In three days another king was to be chosen. On the appointed day, the people gathered in a spacious ground to choose the new king. The old woman and her adopted son—the former younger prince—were there in the crowd.

As was the custom in this country, a domesticated falcon was freed from a cage. It flew over the crowd and settled on the head of the newcomer. The old woman was delighted that her adopted son would be the king. She told the people who

he was. They reacted adversely once they knew that he was a total stranger to the place. They cried, "He has come from the mountains. Let him go back to them! We will not have him for our King!"

The assembly dispersed, to meet again the following day. The prince and his adopted mother went to the ground, but, at his suggestion, they sat down in a graveyard, a little away from the venue. The people were excited once again when the caged falcon was about to be let out.

"On whose head will the bird settle?" everyone was saying. A few thrust their heads as high as they could in the air, just in case...Some prayed aloud, "Allah! may the auspicious bird descend on my head."

The falcon circled in the air, and swooping on the crowd, wheeled around to spot its choice perch, which it finally found in the nearby graveyard. There, to the dismay of the crowd, it again settled on the head of the stranger. The bird was collected by its keeper but the people were still adamant: they would not have a young man, whom they did not know, as their king.

Wiser counsel came from the older people, "We Turks try three times when we want to be sure. Let us try the bird again tomorrow."

Once more the people gathered in the ground. Excitement ran high. The impatient folk, young and old, ran hither and thither, shouting, "Let us see on whose head the falcon will land," while over thier heads the bird flew, looking for its choice perch. And, sure enough, the bird of good omen once again alighted on the head of the young stranger.

There was no more voice dissent. The people realised that the indication was genuine, the will of Allah. To the glee of the old woman, they accepted the young man as their king.

The people realised in course of time that the choice of the king was the best thing that could have happened to them. The king ruled over them so wisely and well that he became the most popular monarch that they had ever known. The old woman who had given him shelter was treated like his own mother and provided separate quarters. The king married a princess, and in course of time, they had a son and a daughter.

Many years passed. One day the king bethought himself of his father, who would be an old king by the time. He sent a message, inviting him and his entourage, on an official visit. The king came, accompanied by a coterie of officials and soldiers. He didn't have the least notion that the king of this principality was his own son, the youngest prince, condemned by him to die for (what he thought was) a breach of manners.

Before the royal feast, the king gave instructions to the head cook about the fine dishes he was to prepare, but added that the ones served to the visiting king and his entourage should not have any salt put into them.

The young king greeted the royal visitor and his party warmly. Polite enquiries were made about each other's health. After an evening of music and dance entertainment, they sat down to the lavishly laid feast. Every viand looked fine, but the ones served to the guests did not have even a grain of salt in them.

The young king, still unrecognised by his old father, persuaded him to stay on at the palace for a few more days.

The diet, however, was the same for the guests, salt-free food and plenty of everything else.

On the third day, the visiting king was already feeling weak in the knees for want of salt in his food. Visiting his officials and soldiers in their tents, he asked them, "My comrades, how are you? Are you well looked after?"

"All is well with us, sire," they replied. "The food and service are excellent. But there is something funny: there is no salt in the dishes."

The king was surprised at the coincidence and said, "There is no salt in my food also. Today I shall ask my host the reason why salt is missing. Maybe, that is the custom here—I am amazed!"

The two kings sat down to the noonday meal. It was a royal repast, as usual. Praising the dishes, the visiting king said. "My dear friend, I have enjoyed the meals and your hospitality all these days. But I am left wondering whether your kingdom is lacking salt..."

He broke off, giving the hint, thinking that the host would understand the grouse. The young king was not embarrassed but replied forthwith, "We certainly have plenty of salt. In point of fact, our supply of the precious commodity exceeds the demand, and we export a good deal of salt to other countries, including yours."

The king was amazed, hearing this explanation, and queried, "If that be so, how is it that we found no salt in our food all these days?"

"My honoured guest," replied the young king, "It was I who gave orders that no salt should be put in your food,

because I knew that you do not like salt and therefore would be better off without it in the dishes."

"That cannot be, *Effendi,*" protested the visiting monarch. "We cannot live without salt, everyone knows! I do like salt, if you need the assurance."

The opportune time had come to reveal himself, the young king thought, and said, raising his voice a bit, "Sire, when your youngest son told you, 'I love you as much as salt,' you had him condemned to death..."

The king realised, after all, that the young king, his host, was the youngest prince and with tears in his eyes, said, "Forgive me, my good son, I did you great injustice. Allah be praised; He saved you and exalted you!"

The two kings embraced each other, as father and son Thereafter, they lived on the friendliest of terms.

6

THE THREE LOVERS

Long, long ago, three friends, Ahmet, Mohamet and Abidin lived in a town. They were really good comrades, very devoted to each other. Since they belonged to the nobility, they had occasion to visit the palace of the king. One day they saw the king's comely daughter in the garden of the palace, and it so happened that they, each one of them, fell in love with the princess.

Since the princess was the only daughter of the king, it was going to be a difficult business as to who would win her hand. The three friends, in spite of their comradely ties, did not disclose to each other how the love bug had bitten each one!

They, however, met one day and agreed that since the time had come for them to marry they must go out into the world to seek a fortune. They decided to set out in different directions, and to meet at the same place after a lapse of two years. Saying farewells to each other, with embraces and kisses on cheeks, they parted company.

The stipulated period of two years passed. Ahmet had saved a hundred *akche*, which was quite a fortune in those days. On his return journey, he came across a busy market in a town. There he heard a merchant shouting: "Come friends, buy a magic mirror! Only a hundred *akche* for the wonderful mirror!"

Ahmet was intrigued. What could be the magic mirror? he asked the merchant, "Well, my elder, why is your mirror so precious?"

The merchant, said with a smile on his lips, "My friend, the magic mirror is unique—the one and only one of its kind in Turkey. Whatever you wish to see, wherever it be, you will see in the mirror. So, my friend, don't lose this golden opportunity to buy the magic mirror."

Ahmet was sorely tempted, for he was thinking of the beloved princess, whom he could see in the mirror. He paid the hundred *akche* to the merchant, took the mirror and resumed his journey.

Mohamet, the second of the three friends had saved 120 *akche* during the two-year trip. He, too, on his way home, was looking up the shops in a town. He heard a merchant speaking aloud, "Come friends, buy the magic carpet for 120 *akche*! This is a unique carpet, come friends!"

Mohamet's curiosity was aroused. He asked the merchant, "Well friend, why is your carpet so costly?"

"This magic carpet," replied the merchant with a flourish of his hands to the sky, "takes you wherever you wish to go! You sit on it, say the wish and , swifter than the fastest pigeon, it takes you there! Now you can see why it costs so much."

Mohamet thought this was a very good purchase for his total savings, handed the 120 *akche* to the merchant and took the carpet, hastening his steps to the home town.

Abidin, the last of the trio, was also on his way home. Like Ahmet, he had saved a hundred *akche*. Wandering in a bazaar in a town, he heard the cry of a merchant, "Friends,

come one and all, buy the magic lemon—for only a hundred *akche*." His curiosity aroused, Abidin asked the merchant. "How come, uncle, the lemon costs so much?"

"You will not get a lemon like this in the whole of Turkey!" exclaimed the lemon seller. "Once the lemon is cut, whoever smells it, whatever the illness, will immediately regain his or her health. Don't miss the opportunity, my young master..."

Abidin did not miss the golden chance. Taking out the hundred *akche* from his wallet, he sped home with the precious fruit.

Very soon he was in his home town, and so were Ahmet and Mohamet. The three friends got together at the coffee shop, which used to be their meeting place.

After enquiring about each other's health, they came to the point—how much each one had saved.

Ahmet said, "Well, my friends, I saved a hundred *akche*. On my way, in a town bazar, I bought this mirror. It is a matchless buy—whatever I wish I can see in this mirror."

Mohamet disclosed to his friends: "Dear comrades, my saving was a little more than Ahmet's. It amounted to 120 *akche*. I spent every *akche* in a bazaar on this magic carpet. I mount this carpet and it flies faster than the fastest bird to take me wherever I wish to go."

It was Abidin's turn to reveal his find. A little hesitatingly, he said, "Like Ahmet I had saved a hundred *akche*. I yielded the whole amount for a special lemon. Here it is—a sick person, however ill he or she may be, is restored to perfect health, when the lemon is cut and the person smells it."

Abidin had hardly finished when Ahmet suggested: "Well, friends, let us look into the mirror..."

The trio sat nearer each other, to look simultaneously into the magic mirror. Though they had not disclosed to each other, each one was still seriously in love with the princess, and each one wished to see her only.

Lo and behold, the princess appeared in the mirror! Their pleasure at seeing the princess after a long time was considerably lessened by what they observed. She was lying prone on a bed, apparently very sick. The friends could guess from the holy recitation going on that the king and queen, and her attendants, were expecting her end soon.

It was a dismal prospect that the friends faced. Naturally, Ahmet and Abidin wanted to try out the carpet bought by Mohamet, and told him, "Dear friend, our Princess is dying. Let us mount your carpet to fly to the palace to see how she is faring."

Mohamet agreed readily. They squatted on the carpet. Instantly, it started flying faster than any bird, and they found themselves within the palace chamber, where the princess, to all intents and purposes, was lying on her death-bed.

The king and queen and the attendants welcomed them and acquainted them with the plight of the princess, how the royal doctors had given her up to the will of Allah. Ahmet and Mohamet turned to Abidin, "Dear comrade, now let us try your lemon. There is hope still, if Allah wills, to save her!"

Abidin was given a knife by an attendant. He cut the lemon and placing the cut pieces on the plate, put them in front of the princess to smell. She did so, very feebly though. A sudden change came in her. Colour rushed back to her

cheeks. She sat up in the bed, looking divinely beautiful, as if she had never been ill!

With the princess restored by a miracle, there was rejoicing in the palace. The king and queen wanted to reward the three friends. They had obviously won the right to the princess's hand. But there developed an ugly situation, that none could have foreseen.

Now that the three friends knew for a fact that each one loved the selfsame girl, they started quarelling with each other, as to who should have her. Each one pressed his claim.

Ahmet: "But for my mirror, how could we have known that she was dying?"

Mohamet: "Well, it was thanks to my carpet that we reached her in time. Otherwise, by the time we arrived she might have been buried."

Abidin: "No one can deny that the princess could not have been cured of her dire illness but for my lemon."

The king heard the disputation, and held his peace. He knew that one of them should have the hand of princess in marriage but he himself was at a loss to decide. So he ordered the cadi to adjudge who deserved the princess most.

Each friend pleaded his case vociferously before the cadi. Ahmet said: "I saw her in my mirror and therefore I am entitled to marry her."

Mohamet pleaded: "It was on my carpet that I flew to the palace, and she should be mine for every reason."

Abidin's plea was passionate: "Mine was the lemon that made the difference between life and death for the princess.

But for the lemon, she would have been in her grave by now."

The cadi having heard them all, turned to Ahmet: "My son, how many *akche* did you spend for your mirror?"

"A hundred," replied Ahmet.

The cadi took out a hundred *akche* and handed them to Ahmet, saying "Here is your money. So you have lost nothing."

Turning to Mohamet, the cadi asked : "My son, how much did you pay for your carpet?"

"120 *akche, Effendi.*"

One hundred and twenty *akche* were given by the cadi to him, while the king and courtiers looked on.

Then came the turn of Abidin, and the cadi said, after some thought, "I don't ask you, my son, how much you spent on the magic lemon. Your lemon was cut and can never be replaced. Yours is the rightful claim to the hand of the princess."

The king and queen and everyone present applauded the wise judgement of the cadi. Abidin was betrothed to the princess and they were married with pomp and show and wedding festivities continuing for many days and nights. They lived happily ever after. Abidin succeeded the king on his death, since the princess was his only daughter.

7

GUL, THE ROSE

There once lived a woman in a small town. She had two daughters, one her own and the other, Gul, her stepchild. Her own daughter was nothing much to look at. Gul was very beautiful, like a rose, as her name Gul (Gul is Turkish for a rose) signified. Gul lived on in the house, kind of tolerated around. She hung to the mementoes of her dead mother: a calf and a parrot. She took care to hide these from her stepmother for she might deprive her of them.

The woman harassed Gul all the time, scolding her on the least excuse. She would give irksome jobs to her to try her endurance to the utmost. One day she gave Gul a big bundle of yarn, commanding her, "Go, girl, comb this yarn and card it, and make sure that you finish the work before sunset. Or, else-"

Seeing the pile of yarn, Gul cried, "Mother, please, how can I possibly comb and card so much yarn before nightfall?"

Her mother would not listen to any entreaty. Her only comment was that Gul always made excuses, to avoid doing work for her.

Still sobbing, Gul left the house for the countryside to find some lone spot where she could comb the yearn to the best of her capacity. Carrying the load, she was crying, speaking aloud, "How can I do this by sunset? Allah, help me!"

A little old woman appeared on the country path and noticed the pretty girl carrying a load but sobbing profusely. Herself moved to tears, she asked the girl, "My pretty child, why are you crying? And, where are you going? Can I be of any help?"

Wiping her tears and sniffing , the girl replied, "Little mother, pray don't ask anything! I have a stepmother, a very stern one. She gives me impossible jobs and when I can't do them, she beats me mercilessly. She gave me all this yarn, to comb and card by the end of the day, 'or else'?"

After saying all this she cried even more, squatting on the ground.

"Take it easy," said the little woman. "You are a nice girl, I can see. A brave girl cries not just for combing yarn! Wipe off your tears. Come with me. We shall see what we can do about the yarn."

The little woman led the girl to her cottage which was not far away. Once they sat in the living room, the little woman told her, "My dear, sit down beside me. While you comb my hair, we shall give the yarn to my cow, and she will comb it with her teeth."

The little woman patted the neck of the cow as she finished combing the yarn. Giving the finished yarn neatly tied in a bundle to Gul, the little woman said: "Here is the yarn about which you were bothered so much needlessly. Now that you are going back home, I want you to return as a better girl. Listen, carefully, to what I have to say. Yonder you will find a stream. Its water is white. Wash your face in it. A little further, you will come across another stream whose water is black. Wash your hair, your eyebrows and your eves with its water. Further on, you will find one more

stream, whose water is red. With its water, you must wash your cheeks and your lips."

Following the directions, Gul washed her face with the water of the first stream, the white one. And, lo and behold! her face became fairer than it ever was, *shining like a mirror.* Dipping her hair in the water of the second stream, the black one, she found that her hair as well as her eyebrows became lustrous black. Likewise, the red water stream transformed her cheeks and her lips into the very colour of the rose that her name stood for. Excited at these changes, she ran as fast as her legs could carry her to her home.

Her stepmother was waiting at the threshold. She could hardly believe her eyes, seeing that Gul had grown more beautiful than ever before. Prodding Gul with questions, she came to know about the little woman who sent her to the three streams, whose waters worked the transformation in her face and hair. Then, suddenly, she remembered the job that she had given to the girl, for that would give her the excuse to reproach her.

"Where is the yarn?"

To her surprise, Gul replied: "Mother dear, here is every strand of it done properly." Finding no fault in the product, she mumbled something, and Gul breathed relief. As for her stepmother, she lost her sleep after having seen Gul grown so much prettier than before and she was devising new schemes to harm her.

By next morning she thought up a plan. She would do away with the calf left by Gul's mother and that would make Gul very unhappy. She called Gul and said: "You have to wash the linen. Take that pot and bring water from the mountain spring."

Gul took the long path to the spring. The pot was too big for her, as she found when trying to lift it on to her shoulders. Weeping and distraught, she ran into the countryside. And, whom should she meet again but the little, kind old woman!

"Why are you crying my child, and whither are you bound this day?" asked the little woman.

Still sobbing, Gul replied, "My stepmother is at me again. She drove me out here to fetch water in the big pot. She, I know, is going to slaughter my little calf, the only memento of my mother."

"Fear not, my dear child," the little woman consoled her. "Do as I tell you. When your stepmother kills the calf, make sure that you don't eat any of its meat. Also, quietly bury the leftovers of the body of the calf. Everything will be all right."

The cruel stepmother did kill the calf soon after she had sent Gul away. When Gul came back home and saw the dead calf, she was sore and unhappy. She buried the body of the calf. She ate none of the meat cooked by her avaricious stepmother.

Several years passed. One day the news reached their town that the prince of the land had made a proclamation that he wanted to choose a bride, the most beautiful girl among the people. The stepmother made preparations to be present at the betrothal feast of the prince along with her daughter who might, so she thought, be chosen as the wife by the prince.

To make sure that Gul stayed home, she gave her a large dish containing a heap of rice, in which whe had mixed cinders. She ordered Gul to separate the rice from the cinders and then she and her daughter, wearing their best apparel, hurried to the prince's palace.

Astonished at the impossible job given to her by the taskmistress stepmother, Gul did not know what to do - how to separate the rice from the cinders - and started crying, even though she was now a big girl.

The door of the cottage opened, and there entered the little woman. "Dear, dear," she said, kissing Gul's cheeks, "what's the matter? What ails you, my dear little girl?"

When Gul told her the problem posed to her by the stepmother this time, the little woman said, "Not to worry, dear. This is the easiest thing in the world." She disappeared and came back with a big hen from her cottage.

Gul was amazed to see the little woman entrust the task to the hen and put the plate in front of it. The hen clucked and started picking out grains of rice quickly and swallowing them. When no more rice grains were to be seen in the plate, the old woman killed the hen, cut open its fattened tummy and recovered the rice intact. Gul was indeed happy at this—one more miracle of the old woman.

Gul was due for more surprises, happier ones that would turn her destiny. The old woman addressed her thus: "Now, now, with your rice-sorting problem over, here is what you have to do. My little darling, go to the place where you buried the calf, and see what luck has in store for you. A bridal dress awaits you there, you will also find gold there. Put that in your pocket. And there will be cinders. Put them in the other pocket of the dress. Then you go to the betrothal feast. There you have to do something special. Scatter the cinders over your stepmother and your stepsister and the gold over all the other women. After spending some time there, get up and take your leave. So, my little one go—and Allah be with you!"

As you would have guessed, Gul ran fast to the spot where she had buried her favourite calf. Imagine her happy surprise when she found a fabulous, gold-embroidered dress, exactly suiting her, neatly folded up! She found the gold coins and cinders and put them in pockets, for use later on, as the little old woman had told her. There was a fine, caparisoned horse with a golden saddle and bridle, waiting for her to ride to the prince's palace. Dressing herself, she rode post-haste to the palace.

When Gul rode into the palace, right up to the corridor leading to the prince's chamber, there was a commotion in the crowd that had gathered there. Everyone taking her to be a princess honoured her according to the status. She threw the cinders on her stepmother and stepsister and scattered the gold coins among the other guests. When she stood up to depart, after a little while, everyone pleaded: "Please, princess, stay a little longer with us!"

She made the excuse, "The prince must be coming and I must leave," and left the assembly. When Gul was riding through the countryside, one of her golden slippers got caught in the bushes and was left there. She went on, wearing one slipper only. She hid the horse and her beautiful costume in a place in the woods and changed into her own clothes, to get back home, so that no one knew of her adventure.

Gul's stepmother and stepsister came home in the evening full of their experience of the day. Thanks to the cinders cast on them by Gul, they had not recognised her at the palace.

They told her, "We enjoyed the palace and the viands served there. And then, a most beautiful princess came there who scattered gold among the guests. Oh, you would have loved to see her." Gul held her peace.

One day it so happened that a witch knocked at the door. Gul would not open the door. The woman, feigning affection, said, "Open the door, my child!"

Gul replied, "My mother is on a journey. She forbade me to open the door to anyone."

"In that case, my darling," said the witch, "show me your finger. Surely, you won't mind." As soon as Gul put out her finger, the witch put a magic ring upon it. Gul fell down in a swoon and the witch disappeared.

Meanwhile, the prince had sent his men to the house of Gul's stepmother to find the missing slipper. Seeing that his bride's toes were cut, he had suspected a rat.

The prince's men came. They knocked at the door. There was no response, save that of the parrot, who went on shouting, "Gul, wake up, your rescuers have come!"

Gul was still in a coma. The prince's messengers forced open the door. They were surprised to find a most beautiful girl lying supine on the ground, and they laid her on a cot. They looked around for the missing slipper. The parrot heard them and said, "Go, look in Gul's basket for the shining slipper. It is in a corner, hidden in the loft."

Sure enough, they found it there. They tried it on Gul's foot, who was still in a swoon. Since the slipper fitted her foot perfectly, they carried her with the slipper and the parrot to the prince.

The prince was happy to see the lovely girl, but was unhappy at the same time, to find that she was in a swoon. He noticed a strange ring on her right hand index finger and took it off. As soon as he did so, Gul came to life. Then she told the prince her whole story and he understood how her

The prince went hunting in the forest, reaching the spot where Gul's slipper was caught in the brambles. His horse, seeing something shining, shied and a huntsman probed the bush, to find the golden slipper. Seeing the shoe, the prince was enamoured of the owner, and told his retainers, "Go find the girl who has the other one of the pair and whose foot this slipper will fit, for I will marry only her and none else!"

Parties of scouts went out of the palace in different directions. They searched high and low but found no clue. No girl whose foot would fit into the slipper was to be found. At last a party reached the house where Gul's mother lived. The slipper was tried on Gul's stepsister. Of course, it did not fit. The mother was resourceful. First of all, she hid Gul in a big basket, then she cut off her own daughter's toes and managed to fit the slipper on her feet. The prince heard the news and sent word that he would marry her. The marriage took place even though the girl was not beautiful. .

Gul's stepmother was the happiest of women, now that her daughter had become the princess. She had money at her disposal now, more than she could imagine. So she wanted to have a good time, by way of visiting her aunt in the mountains. Leaving some supplies for Gul, she told her not to open the door to anyone, during her absence, and with that she was gone.

Left alone in the house, Gul's only companion was the parrot left to her by her mother. The parrot would not only learn what it was taught to speak but, strangely enough, it could speak on its own, very often foretelling things to come. "Your better days will come," the parrot said sometimes. "The imposter in the palace will be exposed." Gul understood the meaning but went about her chores in the house...

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stepmother had cheated him, foisting her ugly daughter on him.

He called the ugly girl before him and asked her, "Which would you have, forty horses or forty knives?"

Optıng for the horses, she replied, "Sire, give me forty horses and then I will ride them to my home."

The forty horses were produced. At the prince's bidding, she was tied to their tails. Her end can well be imagined. She was torn into bits and shreds, as the horses were driven to the countryside from the palace.

The prince was happy that he had got Gul, the most beautiful girl, after all. Their betrothal was announced and celebrated all over the place, with a splendid wedding feast that lasted for forty days and forty nights. Then they were wed.

Good luck to them and good health to us!

8

AUNT LEYLA

A wise and religious Muslim lived in a village in Turkey. He had a daughter, Bilkis, who was fair and beautiful. He was proud of her, for she was his only child, but more so since she looked after him, ever since her young age when her mother had died.

Bilkis cooked for her father and herself and did all the chores of the house, besides finding time to recite the Holy Quran. Her father went on a pilgrimage to Mecca, as he used to every year. This time, however, in view of the fact that Bilkis was fully grown up, he had a special word of caution for her. Before leaving for Mecca, he told her: "My fair Bilkis, you know I love you more than anything else in the world. I would not leave you for these two months but for the fact that I undertake the holy pilgrimage every year. During my absence, do not go outside the house at all, not even to the bazaar, bacause all the provisions are stored for you. Do not open the door to anyone. May Allah preserve you!"

After her father left, the only place Bilkis used to go was to the old well, just beyond her garden, to draw water. One morning, when the well had less than the usual water, Bilkis tied a large stone to her bucket to ensure that she got her bucketful.

The large stone struck a side of the well and made a gaping hole. Looking closely at the hole, Bilkis saw a wondrous garden full of beautiful trees, laden with fruit, and resplendent with flowers of many hues. There were cuckoos,

parrots and nightingales whose songs filled the air. In the middle of this magnificent garden was a pool, fringed with carpet-like lawns and flower-beds. Bilkis saw a prince and a princess resting there. They were not talking to each other. It appeared to Bilkis that something was wrong between them. A liveried servant carrying a tray of sherbet approached them. The prince had hardly sipped the sherbet when he fell down prostrate. Seeing him in a swoon, the princess called for assistance.



A gardener sporting a long thick moustache appeared in answer to her summons. Amused by his funny mustachios, the princess, forgetting the condition of the prince, burst into laughter. Seeing this silly act of the princess, Bilkis picked a quince from her nearby garden and aimed it straight at the face of the princess. Sure enough, it struck her on the forehead. She cried with pain. Hearing the cries, the prince came to, and the gardener, who was the cause of the rumpus, fled from the scene.

The prince picked up the fruit. He sent men around to check from which garden the quince had been plucked. The town folk seeing the fruit said that only the garden of Bilkis' father had such quinces. The prince also came to know that the good man was away on a pilgrimage to Mecca. He wanted very much to see this bold Turkish girl who, he guessed, must be beautiful and virtuous.

The prince thought of a plan to visit the home of Bilkis. He disguised himself as a woman and knocked at her door.

"Who is there?" shouted Bilkis from inside. "I am not supposed to open the door to anyone."

"Well, my darling Bilkis," said the prince, simulating the voice of an old Turkish woman, "I am your Aunt Leyla. I was a friend of your dear, departed mother. Won't you let me in?"

Bilkis came to open the door, and kissed Aunt Leyla on both cheeks, according to the Turkish custom. Aunt Leyla likewise kissed her on both the cheeks, though lingering a little while. She was struck by the beauty and grace of Bilkis.

"My dearest Bilkis," said Aunt Leyla, effusively, "We have so much to talk to each other."

"Where have you been?" observed Bilkis, seating her on the divan and offering her Turkish coffee. "I have not seen you before."

Aunt leyla offered a suitable explanation as to why she had not come for a long time, even though when she and her family were away, they had heard of the death of the dear mother of Bilkis. The chatter went on and on.

"Aunt Leyla", said Bilkis , getting closer to the aunt, "guess what I have done today! I hit a princess with a

quince!" She told her the exciting story of the prince who fainted and why she was angry with the princess.

Aunt Leyla heard the story out with feigned interest, then remarked, "You did the right thing, my dear Bilkis. What the princess did was a gross breach of manners! You taught her a good lesson."

Aunt Leyla left, promising to come again next day. She kept her word, meeting Bilkis every evening. They would chat about this and that and Bilkis failed to see through the disguise of the prince.

About two months passed in this manner. It was time for the pilgrim to return from Mecca. Before coming home, he stopped at the coffee house to acquaint himself with the latest town gossip.

Scarcely had he rested from his long travel the next day, when he was summoned by the prince.

"It is the will of Allah," said the prince to the father of Bilkis, "that I desire her hand in marriage."

The father of Bilkis was happy beyond words. He hurried home to give the good news to his daughter.

Bilkis was indeed overjoyed. She wanted to share the news with Aunt Leyla and awaited her arrival impatiently.

Soon enough Aunt Leyla was there. Bilkis told her that the prince had proposed to her. Aunt Leyla clapped her hands. "It is very good news, my pet Bilkis," she said aloud, so that the pilgrim could overhear her in the next room. "You must convey your consent quickly, my dear," she added and left.

A message of acceptance was sent to the prince along with a basketful of fruits and sweetmeats. Preparations for the betrothal, to be followed by the wedding ceremony and feast, were made. Aunt leyla kept on coming to see Bilkis in the evenings.

Bilkis, however, insisted that Aunt Leyla should stay with her throughout the wedding day. So Aunt Leyla came on the appointed day and got busy with cooking for the guests. She cried that she had hurt her finger while cutting the vegetables. She wanted to go home but Bilkis would not let her go. Bilkis,dressed up as the beautiful bride, bandaged Aunt Leyla's finger with her own silk handkerchief.

Aunt Leyla had to stay on in the house while the wedding feast went on. Later at night, she entered the flower-decked bridal chabmber, and cast aside her disguise for ever. Then Bilkis saw that her prince charming—and bridegroom—was there, in front of her, and Aunt Leyla had vanished from her life!

The prince and Bilkis had a lot of fun, recapitulating the deeds of Aunt Leyla! They lived a happy life as man and wife. And, thus our story ends.

9

THE LEMON GIRL

Once upon a time, long ago, there was a very good and wealthy king. Every year, the magnificent king observed a curious custom for one day. Outside his palace, there were two fountains. He would see to it that one fountain would flow with honey and another with oil, for the day. And his subjects would come with vessels of all shapes and sizes to fill them with honey or oil or both.

Amongst the crowd, filling pots one after the other, was a poor old woman. The king's son, spotting her from a window of the palace filling her jugs, seized his bow and arrow, on a mischievous impulse. Out shot an arrow and hit one of the old woman's jugs and made a hole in it, spilling the honey all over.

The poor woman, seeing the perpetrator of her damage, cried, "You may be the son of a king but shall fall in love with the 'Lemon Girl'." The prince heard her, little knowing that this small incident would change the even tenor of his life. Lifting the other jug, containing oil, she departed.

The effect of the curse on the prince was immediate. From that instant, he lost appetite, and became weak and paler and paler day by day. The king was concerned to see his son in this condition and asked him, "What ails you, my dear son?"

"I am madly in love with the 'Lemon Girl'," replied the

prince, feebly. "I must find her, whoever she be and wherever she be."

Soon enough, the prince left the palace, bidding goodbye to the king and queen, in quest of the 'Lemon Girl.'

No one knew the whereabouts of the 'Lemon Girl' until he came upon a holy dervish who asked him, "Where are you going, my son? You seem none too well."

"May peace be upon you, holy father," the prince replied. "I am madly in love with the 'Lemon Girl' and am searching for her everywhere."

The dervish mused a while, then spoke at length. "For that is ordained, I shall tell you how to find the 'Lemon Girl'. Listen carefully and remember all I have to say, so you will find her. You will reach a rose garden beyond yonder mountain. Do say aloud, 'What a beautiful rose garden!' when you pluck a rose. Don't mind the thorns which are abounding. Then you will come across a stream. Drinking water from it, shout. 'What clear water!' Then you will see a dog and a horse. In front of the dog will be a bushel of hay and there will be meat facing the horse. Replace these, so that the meat is in front of the dog and the hay before the horse. Then you will come across two gates, one open and the other shut. Close the gate that is open, and open the gate which is shut, and enter through the latter. The gate leads you to a big, lovely garden. A demon lives there. There is a lemon tree in that beautiful garden, bearing only three lemons on its branches. Pluck the lemons from the garden, and flee the garden as fast as you can. You may cut the lemon when you have reached a stream. A girl will issue forth from each cut lemon and will shout for water. The girl will die instantly if you do not give water. Go forth, my son, and Allah be with you!"

Kissing the hand of the holy dervish, and memorising the instructions, the prince resumed his march towards the mountains with confidence. Sure enough, a rose garden came into view. Avoiding the spreading thorns, he plucked a full-grown red rose, smelled it, and said aloud, "What a lovely rose garden!" Then came the stream, from which he drank some water, uttering the words, "What limpid water!" Then, he saw the dog with the hay and the horse with the meat, and exchanged their eatables, so that the dog had the meat and the horse, the hay. Then he walked on, until the two gates came in view. The open gate was closed by him, and and shut gate opened, which gave him entry to the fine, big garden. Following the dervish's final direction, he sped to the lemon tree, plucked the three lemons and started to run from the garden. Unfortunately, the demon saw him in the act.

The demon pursued him from a distance. The prince was near the gate. The demon shouted to the first gate, "Catch this mortal! Catch him, gate!"

The first gate answered the demon, "I have stood open for hundreds of years, and nobody would shut me. This mortal did, and I am relieved. So, I will not catch him for you."

To the same entreaty, the second gate replied, "I have stood shut for centuries. You promised me I would be opened one day, but you did not. This mortal did. I am relieved. So, I too will not catch him for you."

The demon cried to the dog and the horse: "Catch him, hold this mortal before he flees!"

The dog replied to the demon, "This is a kind mortal. He fed me with meat. I will not hold him for you."

The horse followed suit : "This one is a kind mortal. He fed me with hay. I will not catch him for you."

The demon had not himself caught up with the swift-footed prince who was running for his life as fast as his legs could carry him. The demon seized his last chance, calling upon the rose garden to arrest the prince.

The rose garden was equally uncooperative and for good reasons. Not heeding the demon's command, the rose garden let the prince pass, and replied to the demon thus : "You vile monster, you never had the time to pluck a rose from my garden, and smell its sweet fragrance. This mortal did so and paid me a handsome compliment. I let him pass out of your clutches."

The demon, still following the prince, reached the stream, which remembering the tribute paid to it by the prince, let him pass. As for the demon, the stream recollected, he used to call its water muddy and would never drink from it. When the demon tried to cross the stream, he was obstructed by the stream.

The prince breathed in relief to see the demon flounder in the stream, which finally drowned him. He travelled far, to make sure of his safety. Before long, he was bugged by curiosity to find the contents of the lemons.

He cut one of the lemons. Lo and behold! a girl issued forth. She cried, "Water, water!" Water was not handy for the prince at the moment. The poor lemon girl wilted and died in no time.

The prince walked on and on. Again, curiosity overpowered him and he cut open another lemon, speaking to himself, "I wonder whether the other lemons too have girls

inside?" A girl came out of the lemon, cried for water, and died.

The prince felt very sorry that his curiosity had killed two lemon girls. He checked himself until he reached the bank of a stream. Then, with a prayer to Allah, he cut the third and last lemon. As soon as the girl appeared, he threw her into the water, to make sure that she had her fill of it.



The lemon girl grew in size, bathed and frolicked in the water, and drank as much water as she could. She looked like a houri from heaven when she came out of the water, to be warmly received in the open arms of the prince, overjoyed that after all he had the 'Lemon Girl'.

After they talked a lot and got to know each other, the prince told her that he would forthwith return to the palace. "I must give the good news to the king and to the queen. They will make the travel arrangements to take you there, followed by musicians and escorted by soldiers."

The 'Lemon Girl' bade him farewell, but added a rider : "Make sure that when you reach the palace your father and

mother do not kiss you on the forehead. If they do so, you will forget me. So take care, and Allah be with you!"

The prince kissed her goodbye, promising to follow the instructions and to come for her soon. After several days he reached the capital city. The people welcomed him with garlands. The welcome was more effusive at the palace. In his excitement he forgot the important instruction of the 'Lemon Girl'! According to the custom, the king and the queen kissed him on the cheeks and on the forehead. In a trice, he forgot the 'Lemon Girl'.

Unaware of this happening, the 'Lemon Girl' went about, awaiting the prince at the riverside. There was a poplar tree. She commanded the straight, tall tree to bend down.

The tree obeyed. She climbed the poplar nimbly to reach the top. Her image—milk-white face and golden locks—was mirrored in the river below.

There was a rich man's house near the poplar tree. An Arab maid-servant used to fetch water from the river in a jug. When she came, she happened to see the reflection of the 'Lemon Girl' in the water. Mistaking it as her own image, the Arab girl shouted with glee, "I am so fair and beautiful and yet I fetch water and do the household chores! Surely, I deserve better!"

She broke the jug on a rock and went back to the house. There she addressed her mistress, "I have seen my likeness in the water, madam. I am so very beautiful. I tell you! I am not going to fetch water any more."

The mistress of the house, who had seen the 'Lemon Girl' atop the poplar tree, was amused at the conceit of her

servant, and said, "Foolish Arab maid, go back to the riverside. This time look up at the tree and not in the river."

When the Arab girl looked up at the branches of the poplar tree and saw the 'Lemon Girl', she was disillusioned. Recovering her poise, she addressed the girl. "Oh, little fair lady! How did you manage to climb so high? Can I come up to you?"

The 'Lemon Girl' was already fed up waiting for her Prince Charming. She thought that it would be a good idea to have a chat with a girl of her own age.

"Bend down, my poplar tree!" she commanded, and the tree bent down, to the amazement of the Arab girl, who was picked up. Sitting facing each other among the topmost branches, the two girls chattered. The 'Lemon Girl' told the Arab girl her whole story, and the Arab girl related how she had come from Arabia to Turkey with the master of the house, and how she slaved at the household chores day and night.

The Arab girl, cunning as she was, asked the 'Lemon Girl' ever so sweetly, "Pretty Lemon Girl, since you are a fairy, what is your talisman?"

Innocently enough, the 'Lemon Girl' revealed her secret. "My hair pin is my talisman. I will be turned into a bird if it is pulled from my hair."

The Arab girl said, 'Pretty fairy girl, see I am so dark. Just for once I would love to see myself in your clothes and jewellery."

Hardly suspecting any mischief, the 'Lemon Girl' agreed. She took off her silken and velvet dresses, which the Arab girl put on, along with the 'Lemon Girl's' diamonds

and jewellery. They went on gossiping, when the Arab girl said, "Bend your head, pretty fairy. Let me comb your golden locks."

The fairy bent her head, and the Arab girl, feigning to comb her golden tresses suddenly took out the magic hair pin. Lo and behold, the 'Lemon Girl' became a bird—a white dove—and flew away! The crafty Arab girl, bedecked in the most beautiful robes and jewellery, remained alone on the top of the poplar tree.

The prince remembered the 'Lemon Girl' after a few days, when the welcome festivities were over. He was beside himself with pangs of separation from her. With the king's permission, he got together soldiers and musicians and set out to recover the 'Lemon Girl'.

The riverside echoed with the sound of drums and pipes. The Arab girl, still sitting atop the poplar tree, heard them and was happy, saying to herself, with anticipation of big days ahead. "They have come for me! My luck has turned, after all!"

The prince saw the Arab girl, dressed in the clothes of the 'Lemon Girl'. He thought that his beloved had changed from a fair lady to a dark-complexioned one. Amazed at her change, he shouted. "What has come over you, 'Lemon Girl'? What has changed you?"

The Arab girl, ever resourceful, replied in all sweetness, "My dear prince, I have pined for you, sitting here so high. The sun has darkened me, and the fierce wind blew away the golden colour of my locks. I was afraid that you had forgotten me. I have been crying all along, and, see, what has happened to my eyes. Their beauty has been dimmed with continual weeping..."

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With that the white dove tried to fly but was ensnared by the pitch. The gardener was happy and carrried the dove to the prince. The king liked the dove and had a golden cage made for it.

The cage was hung in the bedroom of the prince. The dove sang full-throatedly and the prince was delighted. Not so the Arab girl who recognised the white dove from the start as the 'Lemon Girl' in the changed guise. She told the prince that she wanted to eat the dove. The prince said that he would produce the flesh of dove for her from the town. She wouldn't hear of it. She wanted the flesh of this very dove.

The prince, willy nilly, was forced to kill the dove and serve it to his wife. Drops of the blood, where the dove was killed, magically produced a cypress tree. It grew and grew quickly, becoming a big tree in no time.

The Arab girl, whose dreams were always disturbing her, was jealous even of the tree. She shouted to the prince. "Have a cradle for my child made out of this tree."

"Why this tree?" he pleaded with her. "We can get the cradle made of cypress wood from elsewhere."

"Only the wood of this tree will do," she insisted. The cradle was made. The remnants of the big cypress tree lay prostrate. Just then a poor woman came to the prince and said, "Please, Sire, would you give me those branches for my fire?"

The prince cut her short to console her, for he believed her story. He was so devoted to the 'Lemon Girl' that he took the pretender girl with him—the soldiers and musicians preceding them to the palace.

The king, his father, and his mother, could not believe their eyes when they saw the Arab girl. "Is this your beloved 'Lemon Girl'?" they asked tauntingly.

The prince explained to them what the girl had told him about her transformation. Since he had made up his mind to marry the girl, the wedding was arranged. The Arab girl, masquerading as the 'Lemon Girl', became the prince's wife.

Where was the 'Lemon Girl'? Transformed into the white dove, she would appear daily in the palace garden. The white dove would say to the gardener, "When the prince sleeps, let him have lovely dreams, of honey and oil and beautiful things. The Arab girl may dream of evil things and the very devil himself, for she is a devil. And may the branch on which I perch wither."

Every time the white dove came, it repeated these wishes and every time the branch touched by it would wither in no time when the dove flew away.

Thus quite a few branches of the trees of the palace garden withered. One day the Prince noticed these wilted branches, and asked the gardener : "How come these many branches have dried up? Why don't you look after the trees?"

The gardener folded his hands and told the Prince what had been happening.

"Smear the branches of the trees with pitch," ordered the prince. "We will catch the dove."

The gardener did as he was told. Next day, at the appointed morning hour, the white dove appeared and after expressing the dream wishes, said, "Let the branch on which I am perched wither."

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The Prince acceded to the request. The woman carried the branches and the broken pieces of the cypress tree to her home. She went out to the market to buy some eatables.

Something happened in the poor woman's home while she was away. The 'Lemon Girl' appeared in her beautiful, physical form, out of the pile of branches of the cypress tree. Taking in the situation, the 'Lemon Girl' set to sweeping the humble cottage. She cleaned and dusted everything, and started cooking some food. The place was transformed.

The poor woman hardly recognised her house. She went in, then went out, to make sure it was her own home. Realising that someone had effected all those changes, the poor woman cried: "Are you mortal or fairy? Show yourself to me, in the name of Allah."

The 'Lemon Girl' came out, looking more beautiful than ever before. She kissed the hand of the poor woman, as was the custom, and related her story to her. Then she begged her, "Kind woman, in the name of Allah let me be your daughter!"

The poor woman was too happy to have such a beautiful girl as her daughter. They went to the kitchen to eat the nice meal cooked by the 'Lemon Girl'.

The adoptive mother and daughter lived together. They were quite happy with each other.

Days became months and years went by. One day the prince fell ill. The royal doctors prescribed a special kind of broth. A proclamation was made throughout the kingdom. The people, who loved their prince so much, vied with one another to make the broth. They took their recipes to the palace. The prince would try the broths, drink a spoonful or

just sip and leave it. He showed no sign of recovery. The king and queen as well as the people got worried.

The people everywhere were talking about the illness of the prince which was a common concern. The 'Lemon Girl' heard the news in the bazaar. She told the poor woman, "Mother, let us also try to make some broth, and take it to the prince." The woman agreed.

The 'Lemon Girl' prepared the broth, the very best that she could cook. When it was ready, she put a ring in the bowl—the ring was the one the prince had given her at the riverside before she climbed the popular tree. She gave the bowl to the poor woman to carry it to the palace.

At the palace, the guards seeing the poor woman would not let her in. The prince heard of this and ordered that she should be admitted. Nervous and uncertain, she entered the royal chamber and put the broth before him.

The prince took a spoonful. He liked the broth and smacked his lips. He took another, and liked it still more. Then he saw the ring. Seeing it, he understood everything. He asked the poor woman, "Good mother, have you got a daughter?"

"Sire," replied the poor woman, "I have a daughter. What is your wish? Your wish is a command to me."

"Thank you, mother," said the Prince. "Bring her tomorrow evening under this window. I shall throw a basket loaded with gold. Take out the gold bricks and put your daughter in it. Then I shall pull up the basket and you keep the gold in return for your daughter." Bowing before the prince, the poor woman left.

On the following evening, the poor woman conducted her adoptive daughter to the palace. They waited beneath the window. The basket, loaded with gold, came down from the window. The poor woman took out the gold and placed her lovely daughter in it.

The basket was hauled up by the prince's servants. The 'Lemon Girl' stepped out, looking even more beautiful than she was when she had come out of the stream. The prince embraced ber warmly. She wiped tears of joy from her eyes.

The prince's sickness was already gone when he had tasted the soup prepared by the 'Lemon Girl'. The king and queen saw her and were overjoyed. Arrangements were made for the marriage of the prince with the 'Lemon Girl'.

Everyone understood the wiles of the wicked Arab girl. She was tied to the tails of forty horses who were driven to the hills over rough terrain. Her body was torn into shreds.

The marriage festivities of the prince and the 'Lemon Girl' went on for forty days and forty nights. They lived happily ever after.